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# THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

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# THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

The Gifford Lectures

DELIVERED IN THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. ANDREWS

IN THE YEAR 1924–25

BY

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# I

## INTRODUCTION:

## SUBJECT AND METHOD

A GIFFORD Lecturer, especially one who is framing a second series, is sure to be embarrassed in his search for a novel theme. For so many lectures have already been given on this foundation in the four Universities of Scotland that it is unlikely that

ERRATA

Page 145, line 22, *for* council *read* counsel
Page 270, line 2 from foot, for *God* read *Good*



desired his lecturers to handle. Its speculative and practical importance hardly needs exposing: it is concerned so deeply with our spiritual history both of the past and of the present: it is so full and clearly written a record of our hopes and fears and ideals, of our achievements along the various paths of civilization, law, politics, morality, arts, sciences, and religious experience. It forms an essential part of any complete general history of religions; and the critical exposition of it touches

on many philosophical problems of ethics and metaphysics.

It may be well at the outset to announce more precisely the scope of this course. It is not directly concerned with that which is the basis of all higher religion, the assumption or the conviction of the existence of a God ; but its chief concern is to review the qualities and activities attributed to God in the living religions or in those that have lived and had force. Therefore as regards the philosophy of religion, it will only deal with the philosophic thought that has borne fruit in real popular belief, not with that which may have only worked in the solitary brain of the eccentric thinker. It will endeavour to arrange or present the divine attributes in a certain scale, proceeding from the lower and more material or physical conceptions to the higher and more spiritual. It will also be concerned with tracing out the logical implications in the attribution to the divine power of a given quality or function ; further, it will have to consider whether any particular attribution harmonizes or conflicts with others that are generally regarded as essential to the concept of divinity, and, if there is revealed to be a conflict, whether the popular religion or religious thought is conscious of it, and whether the apparent antimony is capable of solution.

Though our main study will lie in the field of the higher religions—for it is only in these that the attributes become of deep interest and complexity—we shall occasionally have recourse to the facts

presented to us by the study of the lower as well; for it is now a truism that in the greatest world-religions deposits of the ruder and more primitive thought survive by the side of the highest spiritual products, and centuries of liturgical repetition of act and formula deaden the sense of incongruity. As a recent writer on Indian Theism has observed: 'It has always been found possible everywhere to hold together at one period thoughts that later reflection discovers to be contradictory, and it is generally alleged of Indian thinking that it has peculiar capacity in this respect.' [1] But sooner or later among a progressive people the intellect challenges such incongruities and is called upon to harmonize or expunge them, a function of religious logic which our theme will compel us to undertake in due course. On the historical side of our subject, we may glance at the influence of certain divine concepts or attributions on social institutions, ethics, art, and literature.

Our material is the religious literature of the world, which no individual student can master in a life-time, but which the labours of qualified specialists are rendering accessible and available for general comparison. We may draw also sometimes and for certain purposes from religious art.

After this statement of the scope, purport, and method of this course, certain preliminary observations suggest themselves, so as to avoid misunderstanding. Our theme is an essential chapter in

[1] MacNicol, *Indian Theism*, p. 26.

Comparative Religion, which is a science, that is to say, an intellectual activity; and it may be objected that religion does not lend itself to a purely intellectual treatment, as it is not primarily a matter of the intellect. If this objection were felt to be a serious challenge of the validity of the science of Comparative Religion, it would be none the less effective against all Christian and other theology. For these theologies, though basing themselves on revelation, a divine phenomenon which a Gifford Lecturer is prohibited from considering, are nevertheless mainly intellectual systems, striving to give the logical deductions of a certain religious metaphysic. But we escape the objection by a clearer view of the relations of the intellect to religion. It may well be that the basis of religion is never primarily intellectual, that the true source and strength of it is not in the intellectual sphere, and that no intellectual proof of the existence of God has been able to maintain itself as convincing. Let us admit that the stuff of religion is emotional and psychic; that faith in the being of God may be an intuitive and self-sufficing intuition of the soul; that Plotinus, Baron von Hügel, and Dean Inge are right in preferring intuition to discursive reasoning. But it is scarcely necessary to observe that the scientific reason can reflect on psychic and emotional phenomena, and that a scientific treatment of religion is just as valid as the scientific treatment of the facts of poetry and art, which like those of religion are drawn mainly from a non-intellectual sphere. In fact, the conflict between the religious

and the intellectual faculty cannot be regarded as inevitable. It has arisen frequently, especially in Christendom, from the usurpations now of the one faculty now of the other. When religion claims to make definite judgements about cosmology or the phenomena of the physical world, to decide that the earth is flat or that the sun goes round the earth, we call this usurpation; and the Greek physicists were justified as against the writer of Genesis and were more truly inspired. Progress in religion consists partly in a recognition of its true sphere and a wise self-restraint, and religion is dangerous and in danger when it defies or challenges the rightful claims of the intellect. On the other hand, it is part of the function and it is in the power of religion to give us a scale of values, which the discursive intellect is wholly powerless to give. For it is not by intellectual reasoning but by some intuitive and mysterious soul-activity that we pronounce one thing higher than another in the scale of being; just as in ethics, the intellect devises means to ends and traces out the results of actions, but does not give us the end or decide authoritatively on good and evil. It is at the same time true that prolonged intellectual activity and devotion to the mode of life that maintains it engenders a certain faith of its own, a certain sense of values, that is likely to react on religion and modify it. Thus a devoted physicist may be so penetrated with the sense and the value of the law and order of the cosmos that he must revolt from a religion which

proclaims indiscriminate miracles and casual divine interference with nature.

Also, while keeping carefully within its own sphere the intellect has played a great and progressive part in the development of religious systems, comparing religious judgements and testing their coherence, clearly eliciting the assumptions on which they rest, and tracing religious institutions, judgements, and emotions, to their discoverable origin.

We note how prominent is the question of origins in recent investigation bearing on the science of religion: and how in alarm at the possible results of such research the champions of higher religious orthodoxy endeavour to intrench themselves within the position that origin does not affect validity. It may be helpful to consider this axiom a little, for we may be forced at certain points to consider origins; and it is well to have some estimate beforehand what such considerations are likely to be worth. We see at once that in ordinary human life the axiom by no means always holds; but that the question of origins of a title or a claim is often vital in respect of validity. It is also decisive in certain questions of higher Christian theology and of the theology of other world-religions that base themselves on certain sacred books regarded as inspired. Many momentous controversies, such as those that have divided Christendom concerning apostolic succession, the doctrine of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Eucharist, have turned and still greatly depend on the interpretation of New Testament texts, or on

the authenticity of certain writings included in the canon. And even now there are many Christians who allow or refuse validity to any particular rite or dogma according as they believe or disbelieve that it is confirmed by a passage in the Bible. In this simple sense, then, in the sphere where Sacred Books are cherished and appealed to, origin deeply affects validity.

But the influence of origin upon validity is more subtle and far-reaching than this. It has been and indeed may reasonably be maintained that if a certain ritual or belief is pure and high, beautiful and noble, helpful and comforting to those who hold or partake in it, the scientific historian of religion may succeed in showing that it developed from something lower, something perhaps impure or cruel, primitive and savage; and yet its value for us may remain undimmed by this discovery: we may kick away the ladder by which we have risen and continue to enjoy the heights. The Sabbath-rest on one day in the week may maintain itself as of high value to the nation that practises it, although we may smile at the superstition from which it arose, attaching a mystic value to the number seven, and at the crude myth concerning the Creator by which it was justified and which Mahomet pronounced unworthy of belief.[1] We can find another justification; and we know that much that is good for us has been reached by strange paths. But in other cases the appeal of religious belief or feeling

[1] *Qur'an*, 50. 35.

may be impaired or at least modified. If it can be clearly shown that certain dogmas that we have believed essential to our higher theology are only transfigured refinements or symbols of some old-world ritual that is abhorrent to us, such as human sacrifice, or of some crude ethical view which we now pronounce immoral, such as the rightfulness of vicarious punishment, it may well be that those dogmas will gradually lose their hold on the thoughtfully religious. The strength and durability of an article of faith or of a cherished ritual may be greatly affected by the proof that it descends from an inspired and exalted source or has a lowly and disreputable ancestry. We can imagine how difficult it might be to maintain a fervid Mariolatry among sincere Christians, if the worshipper was vividly conscious that he was worshipping, not the historic personage, but another form of the great Pagan Goddess of the Mediterranean.

We must admit, then, that the discovery of origins may exercise a momentous influence upon religious faith and even practice. And the same may be said of some of the other functions and fields of investigation proper to the science of Comparative Religion. In fact the workers in this field must expect to arouse a measure of hostility in certain orthodox circles; for however intellectual and detached may be their devotion to their task, it may easily modify the temperament and attitude of the average religious man, as their results penetrate the public mind. The mere process of comparing religions and

the exposition of the similarity found in the higher in respect of doctrine, ritual, and legend may dim the enthusiasm of a one-eyed faith, that once clave passionately to the conviction that its religion was a new and unique revelation, springing whole and uncontaminated from a divine source. That claim was long maintained for Christianity by the early fathers and the later authorities of the church or the churches, inheriting as they did from their early struggle with Paganism and from the strong Judaic strain in their spiritual ancestry a Judaic hatred of other creeds. But much study and research, fruitfully pursued by the last generation of scholars, have invalidated that claim, and it is no longer maintained by our more enlightened theologians.

The indebtedness of early and later Christianity to certain institutions, certain ritual, certain beliefs of Paganism, Hellenic, Anatolian, Egyptian, possibly Zarathustrian, has long been admitted ; I have dealt with the subject elsewhere and need not elucidate it now. But it is relevant here to point out that this recent discovery has compelled or stimulated the champions of orthodox Christianity somewhat to change their position. No longer happily content with the formula ' origin does not affect validity ', a leading prelate of Rome has in recent years maintained the superiority of Roman Catholicism to all other forms of Christianity on the ground of its tolerant absorption of all that was best in the Graeco-Roman Empire. And the new phrase ' progressive revelation ' has been dexterously used to

sanctify the modern conception of evolution in religion ; how quaint and bizarre may be its working in any particular case to which it may have to be applied is not a consideration that troubles the users of the phrase.

The intellectual student of the science of religion may be merely devoted to truth and indifferent as to the possibly far-reaching practical results of his work. But it is clear that such results, direct or indirect, are inevitable. His investigations may establish that certain mystic conceptions about the altar that have been recently revived are rooted in ancient fetichism, which we condemn ; that certain modern sacramental ideas are the sublimated product of ancient barbaric ritual which repels us ; that certain legends attaching to the high personalities of our religion are asserted with equal emphasis and equal evidence of the personalities of other religions, which we regard as fictitious and depraved : that the miracles of our sacred books do not markedly differ in quality or in the value of the evidence attesting them from the miracles that abound in the story of other faiths.

And all this is not likely to leave the enlightened religious temperament as it found it. The science of religion is not then solely an intellectual activity ; it cannot avoid being also pragmatic. Whether its influence on the religious mind is helpful or harmful depends greatly on the wisdom with which its results are used. This at least is certain that if progress in religion is still humanly possible, possible

that is through human thought and will, comparative religion can be a most useful guide for pointing the paths of advance: and if no advance is possible, it can still be of service in saving us from possible retrogression, of which there are ominous signs around us; for the full history of religion includes the darkest chapters in the whole record of human illusion and misery.

This introductory chapter may conclude with a few general observations that concern our main subject before we come to the multifarious details.

We shall have to note that according to the different mentality and historical environment of the different nations, different attributes become more or less prominent in their conception and presentation of divinity. But what is still more striking is the similarity in the different complex accounts of the High God or Gods. In Vedic and Vedantic theology, in the Hellenic, the Judaic, the Christian, the Islamic, and the Zarathustrian systems, the multiplicity of divine attributes could be brought under the three great categories, Potentia, Sapientia, Bonitas—Power, Wisdom, and Goodness—which was the quasi-trinitarian formula summing up the medieval schoolmen's ideal of God.[1] Without resorting to the theory of divine revelation vouchsafed to the various peoples, we may discover certain secular causes, both material and psychic, for this. Allowing the truth of the ancient poet's phrase [2]—'all men stand

[1] Vide Rashdall in *Personal Idealism*, p. 387.

[2] Aratus, *Phainomena*, 1. 2–5.

in need of God', we note in the whole life-record of man the constancy of human needs, especially in the material sphere, but also in the moral and spiritual. And human need has been one chief cause for the imputation to the divinity of certain powers and qualities, because of the strong belief that he ought to have these and must have these in order to be able and willing to respond to our prayers and satisfy our needs. We must not imagine the early societies starting with clear and elaborate religious concepts which shaped their prayers. It was rather the prayer that helped to shape and make articulate the concept by the use of traditional formulae of invocation repeated by many generations and varied according to the varying needs of the worshipper; when rain or sun was desired for the corn and fruits, the deity would be invoked under such terms and with such titles as marked his or her power in the physical world and beneficent will to maintain the physical life of man: when the individual or the community felt the need of expiating some sin, the deity would be invoked in terms expressing his character as the merciful and forgiving God, the friend of suppliants and the deliverer from sin. The forms and methods of petitioning the supreme power in the spiritual world are a reflex of those that have been found effective in appealing to the supreme power in the secular. These invocations just exemplified express the manifold hopes of the worshipper, the hopes that the deity is of such and such a nature as to minister to his manifold

wants. From hope long continued and often expressed emerges faith, and as faith becomes fixed, a definite theology dogmatizing on the nature of God becomes possible.

Fully to understand the process adumbrated above, we must realize the quasi-magic value attaching to invocations and formulae of prayer. Fundamentally and according to the true law of their function, prayer and magic are mutually antagonistic and irreconcilable. And religions rise in the spiritual scale according as they discard all magic. But in subtle ways and for long periods the spirit of magic insinuates itself into the spirit of prayer, owing to the strange human fallacy of attributing a magic-power to the use of divine names and formulae. We are not so concerned here with the fact, familiar to the student of Babylonian Liturgies and Zarathustrian Sacred Books, that sublime phrases expressing the nature and attributes of the High God were recited for magic purposes, for instance to avert demons; it is more pertinent to our present point to realize that the special formulae of invocation, the special terms of address to the divinity, were felt or half-felt to exercise a constraining or at least a powerfully persuasive influence upon him; and such use of them, if not religious magic, may be termed religious mesmerism. The worshipper will then carefully select that particular divine appellative which exactly corresponds to his need, and powerfully invokes or—we may say—evokes the deity by that. Hence arises

a large liturgical vocabulary of such appellatives, and their influence in building up, in articulating and enriching the complete conception of the Godhead is obvious.

The far-off echo of these old-world voices is faintly audible in our own liturgies. But the process that I have been trying to describe is most saliently and at times strangely manifested in the religious phraseology of Hellenic paganism. I may here quote a few words that I wrote in 1910,[1] which still seem to me to be true and to mark a rarely noted phenomenon in the evolution of divine personalities: I referred to 'a small class of divine appellatives, which are directly transferred from the worshipper to whom they properly belong, to the deity by a curious motive of religious magic, so as to make the invocation stronger in its compulsion'. Zeus is not really believed in his own self to be a suppliant, but Aeschylus and an archaic Spartan inscription invoke him as Zeus 'the Suppliant'. The religiously minded Greek did not believe that his High God was a miserable sinner; but 'it seems that Aeschylus dared to call him so for Ixion's sake'. For in his play, Ixion, being a miserable sinner, like Cain, the first murderer and wanderer on the face of the earth, is indeed 'Alastoros' in every sense; and in order to evoke the sympathy of Zeus he invokes him by the name Alastoros, that only expresses his own condition. Zeus was no husbandman, yet an Attic inscription invokes him as such (γεωργός), in order

[1] *Classical Quarterly*, 4, p. 187.

to quicken his sympathy with husbandmen. Zeus was not everybody's kinsman, yet any injured kinsman could call on Zeus 'the kinsman' to aid. In Arcadia the girls invoked Hera by the title of 'Hera the Girl', the married women prayed to 'Hera the married one', more quaintly 'the widows prayed to Hera the widow, without asking whether Hera was a widow'. These are a few instances . . . of a Greek psychical magico-religious law . . . 'by a daring magic-transference of his own self, his own condition, his own need to the God, he could evoke between him and the object of his spell-prayer a temporary communion and the sympathetic help that comes from communion'. We can discern the same strange impulse working secretly in early Christianity, which from our own human needs evolved the idea of the suffering God as a dogma of its highest theology.

The process above described would explain the striking resemblances between the higher theologies of the world; and I believe it to have played a real and active part in their gradual evolution. But if it were given as the sole process, such a theory would be open to the objection that it presents religion as a pragmatic and utilitarian system, a projection or sky-reflexion of man's own mind and will craving satisfaction for his terrestrial needs. We have, most of us, come to recognize the weakness of a pragmatic philosophy; it is doubtful if any one can really believe in an external world merely because such belief is found 'to work' and to be a paying pro-

position. It is certain that no religion can be maintained on a consciousness that man invented and developed God and built up the divine character as a reflex of his own nature and aspirations. For man cannot long pay conscious worship to a make-believe, to his own creation or to himself. When it has been pointed out, as it was by Euripides and Plato, that man has often imputed his own evil nature to the divinity, the progressive races, so far as they were conscious of doing so, endeavoured to purify their religious thought of such imputation. If they could also have been convinced that the High God, even so purified, was only the reflex of their own better nature, it is difficult to believe that any higher religion could have been maintained or would not have fallen back to the lower level of magic. For one of the fundamental postulates of the former is a belief in the 'Eternal not-ourself'. Whatever part 'make-believe' played in the early evolution, however prone man has been 'to make Gods in his own image', he has been able to transcend that phase of self-deception and to achieve a stable faith in objectively real personages with essential and eternal attributes higher than man's and not given by man: just as at some times he was able to persuade himself that his rudely made fetich-idol had fallen from heaven of its own accord.

But the process that I have described above and that may be called pragmatic is not the sole process in the psychic activity of early religious development. In some of his moods and emotional experiences, in

his moral aspirations and abnegations, equally also in his aesthetic reactions to dance, music, song, and the beauty of the natural world, at times in his outbursts of battle-rage and vindictiveness, man has felt himself in communion with a life and a power other and stronger than himself which possesses him, 'ecstasizes' or carries him out of himself, exalting him or subduing him, and which he cannot but personify as superhuman and divine. This psychic process is not 'pragmatic', but goes with an intuitive soul-perception that is probably the deepest and most nourishing root of theistic religion. It has helped us to the highest ideals of Godhead; it has also exposed us to the belief in devils. We shall often have to recognize its potency in the varied religious history that these lectures endeavour to present.

## II

## PERSONAL AND ANTHROPOMORPHIC DEITY

We have not yet wholly finished with the embryology of our subject. It is only at a certain stage of religious evolution that the idea of divinity becomes sufficiently definite and clear to serve as a focus for many attributes and qualities. And recent research has made us aware of certain phases of vague religious consciousness in which the concept of a personal divinity with a complex character has not yet emerged. These phases are marked by the coinage of such names as Animatism, Animism, 'Sonder-Götter'. The psychic feeling or emotion which these names connote must be called religious, for its dominant note is awe, the sense of the mysterious, and it prompts to real acts of worship; but it does not carry with it any clear perception of a High God, but at most only that of a 'divine' force or potency, dimly conceived perhaps as half-personal or conscious, immanent in some material thing or portion of nature or some department of human activity. As typical examples we may note the cults of Hestia or 'Holy Hearth' in Greece, or, in the Roman record, of Rust (Robigo), Money (Pecunia), Fides (Faith), Cardo (the Hinge), the separate powers that work in rust, money, and human faith, in the

hinge of the door. These latter are some of the 'Sonder-Götter', or as we might call them 'Monad-deities', that have no life or power or character beyond the sphere of the thing or the activity after which they are named. We learn about them from Varro through St. Augustine; we are not sure that the account is true, and the controversy about them does not concern us here. It concerns us more to realize that Roman religion contributes less than most others of the civilized societies to our present inquiry. For even in its higher phases, while yet uncontaminated by the Greek, it remained nebulous in its religious perceptions, without mythology or the material basis for a theology, but with an unorganized system of 'Numina' or shadowy and vaguely conceived potencies, like Jupiter Optimus Maximus making on the whole for righteousness but with no clear-defined character or complex of attributes. It is true that our recent great Latin scholar, Warde Fowler, has emphasized and mainly convinced us of the superiority of the old Roman religious temperament as compared with that of the average Greek, in respect of awe, reverence, shy reticence, high seriousness, and trust. And he regards it as a misfortune for the Roman soul that the Roman state was captured by Greek polytheism and so lost the opportunity of developing a higher religion on its own religious experience. This may well be true. Nevertheless, Greek polytheism was a far more developed theistic system, and as it presents us with an organized world of deities with

clear-cut personalities of manifold activities and complex attributes, it contributes far more to our present inquiry. An impersonal religion, a religion based on the idea of impersonal divinity, divine Law or Power or Order, even an 'Eternal not-ourselves that maketh for Righteousness', may be a source of strength to some rarely endowed thinkers, but has not yet played a vital part in our religious history or appealed with any force to the popular mind. Even Buddhism, starting with an inherent depreciation of personality and personal deity, has only survived as another form of personal theism. It was a keen feeling for the realities of religion that prompted Hooker's anger against the sect that called itself 'The Family of Love', who in his words 'depersonalized Christ into a quality whereof many are partakers'.[1] He would agree with the great Indian teacher of the sixteenth century, Tulsī Dās, who weary of the Absolute exclaimed 'the worship of the Impersonal laid no hold of my heart'.[2]

Our inquiry then only begins to be fruitful on the plane of personal deities or θεοί, to use the Greek name that has given us the scientific term 'theism'. And if we may trust the anthropologic record of modern savages as evidence of the primitive stage of our race, we must say that the power of conceiving personal deities is a very ancient achievement of the mind of man. When we study the religions in which theism was most highly developed, the Hellenic,

[1] *Works* (ed. Keble), vol. 1, p. 148.
[2] MacNicol, *Indian Theism*, p. 116.

Zarathustrian, Judaic, Christian, and Islamic, we discern that it is in these that the personality of the deity becomes most complex, articulate, and enriched with attributes, qualities, or functions. And it is enlightening to contrast with the vagueness and comparative emptiness of the concept of the Latin Jupiter the characterization of Mahomet's Allah as expressed in the ninety-nine 'good names' given in the *qur'an* by which he is to be invoked, connoting the qualities and functions of Majesty, Creativeness, Justice, Mercy and Love, Wisdom and Truth.[1]

Starting then with personality as a basis of the divine attributes, we discern that a personal God must also be a conscious God; and though Buddhistic philosophy [2] could conceive of unconscious Gods as higher in the scale of Being than the conscious, and though philosophers may refuse consciousness to the Absolute, neither the unconscious God nor the unconscious Absolute belong to the history of real religion. Moreover, as we realize that the ideas of personality and consciousness are derived from our consciousness of ourselves, we may be convinced that all personal theism is in a sense anthropomorphic. There is a pronouncement of Goethe's in this connexion—'Man never knows how anthropomorphic he is.' It may be even maintained that in its highest and most transcendental effort religion can never escape from anthropomorphism. For we can only conceive of God in terms of our own human

[1] *Qur'an* (transl. by Palmer), Pt. 1, pp. lxvii–lxviii.

[2] Vide Keith, *Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 213.

faculties, and in the light of our human emotions and our moral, intellectual, and spiritual experience. And the imputed attributes of the Highest God are the glorified reflex of the attributes of the ideal man, though in straining to reach the highest concept we transcend our limitations of time and space. It is then no rebuke to religion to describe it as anthropomorphic; but we may condemn any particular form of anthropomorphism as narrow or trite or degrading.

There are two main senses in which we may speak of the concept of God as anthropomorphic. We may mean merely that the character qualities and functions of the deity are derived from human life; and this is ultimately true of even the most ideal theology; thus we may call the concept of the Creator or the All-Father anthropomorphic, for man knew of himself as a creator with power to make things and to beget life before he could impute such powers and attributes to God.

But a religion may be anthropomorphic in another and special sense, in that it may habitually conceive of and represent its God or Gods in purely human form and find this the adequate and only natural embodiment for the divine personality. Contrasted with this mode of imagining is that which has been called 'theriomorphic', the tendency to embody the divinity in forms borrowed wholly or partly from the animal world. As this has been frequently observed among modern savages, it has been assumed that the evolution of religion passed through a period

of pure theriomorphism on its ascent to anthropomorphism. But we have no right to assume a period of pure theriomorphism or any such law of evolution. For wherever we find theriomorphism we find it blent with a strong element of anthropomorphism: and the savage mind, just as it imputes human faculties, human speech and action, to animals, can incoherently imagine the morning star at the same time as a young boy-God and as a deer.[1] We find the same theriomorphic tendency at work in the religious imagination on a high plane of culture; in the Indian religion it has produced such forms as the elephant-headed God of Wisdom; in ancient Egypt it was specially uncontrolled in the creation of bizarre and to us repulsive shapes; it can be noted also in Mesopotamian and Anatolian religious art, and there are fainter traces of it even in the Hellenic. But in all these societies the anthropomorphic imagination was nevertheless dominant; in Hellenism it is imperious and triumphant; among the others it is unstable, drawing upon the animal as well as the human world for its varying image of the divine;[2] and this might be justified by the feeling that certain animal traits, such as those of the eagle, the bull, and the lion, were able to express more strongly than any human the might and power of the divinity; and we even find such a typical Hellene as Plutarch justifying the Egyptian worship of the beetle on the strange ground that the beetle,

[1] Preuss, *Arch. Rel. Wiss.* 1908, p. 375.
[2] Vide my *Greece and Babylon*, ch. iv.

having the unique power of self-production, was a higher and profounder embodiment of the eternal and self-evolving Godhead than the human form could be.[1]

Now the serious study of religions and especially of religious art convinces us that the history and character of any particular faith may vary greatly, in respect both of its theology and of its emotional and intellectual appeal, according as it is predominantly anthropomorphic or theriomorphic. With our Christian and Hellenic training we cannot divest ourselves of a prejudice against the animal-God, for both Hellenism and Judaism in different degrees were anthropomorphic; and our experience probably justifies us in the belief that upon the popular mind the divine idol with the head of jackal, elephant, hippopotamus, or ape has a degrading influence. Confronted with such forms it is unlikely that the ordinary worshipper will feel love for his divinity or impute to him the attribute of love. They tend naturally to inspire fear, and to suggest magic and a monstrous mythology. Indian religion and art are rank with bizarre medley of forms, but Krishna who inspired the most ardent affection was wholly human-shaped; and in Egypt, the classic land of magic and theriomorphism, it was Isis, the goddess generally imagined as a beautiful woman, not the dog-faced Anubis, whom we know to have been beloved.

But the influence of theriomorphism on religion

[1] *De Isid. et Osir.* p. 382.

has not been wholly degrading. I have pointed out elsewhere[1] its tendency to evolve a mysticizing theology or theosophy; for the higher minds, as they became discontented with the crude and naïve faith in an ape-God, would be sure to allegorize and to resort to abstract conceptions to justify such a Being, as we have seen that Plutarch justifies and finds a mystic meaning in the divine beetle. The proof of this connexion between theriomorphism and mysticism could only be given by detailed study, and I cannot elaborate it now. I may be permitted to repeat merely a passage that I wrote on the subject some years ago.[2] 'The most curious testimony (of the connexion between theriomorphism and mysticism) is borne by an inscription on an Egyptian lamp, an invocation of the God Thoth: "Oh Father of Light, oh Word (Logos) that orderest day and night, come, show thyself to me. Oh! God of Gods, in thy ape-form enter." Here the association of so mystic a concept as the Logos, the divine Reason, an emanation of God, with the form of an ape, is striking enough and suggests to us many reflections on the contrast between the Egyptian theriomorphism and the human idolatry of the Greek. The Hermes of Praxiteles was too stubborn a fact before the people's eyes to fade or to soar into the high vagueness of the Logos, too stable in his beautiful humanity to sink into the ape.'

More interesting and impressive are the products of the anthropomorphic imagination. As was said

[1] *Greece and Babylon*, pp. 14–16. [2] *Op. cit.* p. 15.

above, it has stamped itself upon the great religions of the world. That God made man in his own image was a momentous dogma of far-reaching consequence, proclaimed by Judaism, inherited thence by Christianity and Moslemism, and attributed by Clemens to the Pythagorean sect.[1] The Judaic religion is therefore in one sense as anthropomorphic as the Greek, and this is true also of the popular religious imagination of to-day, which is in silent accord with Michelangelo's words, 'Nor hath god deigned to show himself elsewhere more clearly than in human forms sublime'.[2] But the Semitic religious mind was shy and reticent, not venturing to picture to itself too vividly the figure of the human-shaped God. The Greek mind was more daring and more logical, and worked out all the corollaries of the anthropomorphic dogma with astonishing boldness and to an unparalleled fullness of detail.

But it is more important to note the striking similarity rather than the differences in the working-out of this idea in the various popular religions. Its off-shoots blossomed in prehistoric times and many survive in full vigour to-day, wherever in fact a popular religion maintains itself. For it is reflected not obscurely in many of the forms, ritual, and formulae of universal worship, which reveal, however changed the interpretation may be, the immemorial concept of a finite God, with the attributes and some of the needs of glorified man.

[1] *Strom.* 5, p. 662 P.

[2] Sonnet LVI (Symonds's translation).

The full history of anthropomorphism would reveal the evolution of the concept of deity, presented in the first stage as the naïve and crude concept of the earthly king, with many of the weaknesses, tyrannies, jealousies of his human counterpart, demanding nourishment, gifts and bribes, and angry and vindictive on their omission; then among the progressive communities divested more and more of all human weakness and degradation until it approaches the ideal of human personality transcending the limits of time and space; until at last in the highest speculation or vision, the idea is released from all material embodiment, and God becomes pure spirit, but a spirit still in harmony with man's. This evolution is the record of thousands of years of man's spiritual history, and has been the work of poets, philosophers, and prophets, behind whom the popular imagination has always lagged. Some part of the statement that follows may reveal how far it lags to-day. The general reflection just formulated can only be elucidated now by a few salient examples briefly set forth.

To the cruder conception of the attributes of the finite human God belong such beliefs as that the deity needs an earthly home or habitation and delights in images of himself, needs sacrifice as food or as an honorific tribute, needs followers, slaves and ministers, and, as anthropomorphism essentially implies sex, may need male and female companionship and the *entourage* of family life. The lowly origins and the higher progress of religious thought

are conspicuously revealed in its dealings with these beliefs. No appendage of organized religion seems so natural and universal as the sacred house that we call the Temple or the Church. But the function it fulfils and its true meaning and value in the modern civilized community, and the function and meaning of its ancient prototype the temple of pre-Christian periods, may not be the same. The church was undoubtedly the successor and supplanter of the heathen temple, which it used often without destroying. And the older temple we naturally interpret as the house of the deity, just as Bethel means 'the House of God'. And when Jahwé was no longer content with the moving ark or chest and 'Solomon built him a house', 'the place where his honour dwelleth', the Jahvistic scribe evidently regarded this as a religious advance, and we repeat his words in our service as noting edifying facts. As in the old Judaic religion, so in other areas of higher Mediterranean culture, we find traces of a period when temples were non-existent. The discoveries of the Minoan-Mycenaean civilization have revealed to us no clear traces of public temples, but only private shrines in the king's palace, too small for a congregation. Even in the Homeric period, though temples were evidently beginning, we have reason to think that few of the Hellenic communities had built themselves large God-houses, but that many were content with an altar on a sacred plot, by a sacred tree or fount. While the temples of Egypt and Mesopotamia may be traced back to

the fourth millennium or earlier, we are informed by Herodotus that the Aryan Persians raised no temples but worshipped the High God on the free hill-top; and it seems that their cousins, the Vedic Indians, possessed none in their earliest period. The first historian of our Teutonic ancestors, Tacitus, records the same of them; and marks it as a sign of their nobler imagination that 'they do not think it consistent with the majesty of the Heavenly Beings to confine their deities within walls or to fashion them after any likeness to the human countenance': [1] meaning that they had no temples or idols but only groves and woods for sacred places. We need not discredit Tacitus because our later forefathers both in Scandinavia and other parts of the Teutonic world had become temple-builders and, on a moderate scale, idolaters before the advent of Christianity. The records reveal a certain important truth about the early period of some of the Aryan and some of the Mediterranean communities. We must then consider whether, on the view that the idea of a God who needs a house is a product of a crude anthropomorphism clashing with the higher concept of divine omnipresence, the rise of temple-building in these communities was in some ways due to a degeneracy, a shrinkage in imagination. On the whole this would probably be a false judgement. Certainly we may feel that the ancient Persians were nobly inspired when they preferred to worship the Sky-God in the free open air under the blue sky. Perhaps

[1] *Germania* c. 9.

they had been inspired by Zarathustra, who seems to have worked among them and upon them at a much earlier period than it used to be the fashion to believe. We may be more doubtful about our own ancestors, to whom no early prophet is known to have spoken. But what prevents us explaining this new fact in the equipment of worship as a falling away from an earlier, more ideal view is that the explanation of the origin of the temple as due to the feeling that the deity needs a house does not fit all the facts. Another effective cause was the same crude and primitive feeling, discernible among all the peoples above mentioned, as that which inspired the consecration of the sacred pillar, the sacred tree, and the altar. The early religious mind could not grasp the idea of the omnipresence of God, and needed special assurance that the deity would be present in the particular place where prayer and sacrifice were offered. Certain localities and objects in nature, the dark grove, an impressive tree, a spring, a strangely shaped stone, seemed fraught with a mysterious quality and suggested the haunting presence of the divine. The sacred stone could be shaped into the sacred pillar, and the pillar in some areas may have given rise to the altar. By elaborate methods of consecration the pillar and the altar acquire a strong magnetic power for attracting the divinity down or up.[1] And the spot where they

[1] Note the God drawn down to his sacred pillar on the Mycenean gem, published by Sir Arthur Evans in *Journ. Hellenic Studies*, 1901, p. 170.

stand becomes holy and dangerous and must be fenced round against the approach of the profane or the unprepared; also, the temenos or 'holy close' that thus arises serves to preserve the worshipper from evil influences. The same feeling would prompt the construction of a hut or chapel to contain and safeguard the sacred object, and this could be amplified into the temple. Or the God's house—the 'naos' as the Greeks called it—might be erected behind the altar, to serve as a worthy shelter for the divinity and as an additional means of attracting him or her to the place of worship. All this is only the logical working out of the same idea of the finite and limited character and operative power of the Godhead. At this religious stage, how crude the anthropomorphism, combined with a high civilization, might be is revealed by certain Babylonian texts which express the belief that the deity's power was bound up with the particular temple and was reduced to impotence if that temple was destroyed;[1] a narrowness of view of which there is no trace in Hellenic, Judaic, or Islamic religion.

But utterances of protest were sure to arise from the higher religious thinkers, who attained the conception of an infinite omnipresent God, against the naïve belief that tied God's power to a house or a place. We remember best the utterance in St. John's Gospel: 'the hour cometh when ye shall neither at this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . . God is a spirit and they that

[1] Vide *Greece and Babylon*, p. 173.

worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.' Somewhat akin to this is the phrase of late Pythagorean philosophy: 'God has no more fitting abode on earth than the pure soul'.[1] It may indeed be urged that, as this higher and deeper conception of divinity was proclaimed by the apostles of Christianity, the intention of the early Christian church was in keeping with this; that it abandoned the narrow Pagan view of the temple as the house of God, and constructed its sacred edifice primarily as a gathering-place for the faithful, where private devotion might be quickened and intensified by the sympathetic emotion of the crowd. And it differed in one very important trait from the Pagan temple; unlike the latter, it included the altar within the building, this being used no longer for sacrifice but for sacramental communion.

But when Christianity became fully established, and the ancient temples were replaced by or transformed into the stately church, the old Pagan feeling came back to attach itself again to the new sacred edifice; and the Communion-table has gathered to itself the immemorial sanctity of the ancient altar as charged with the real presence. This idea has even grown more appealing in recent times among us, and is not aware of its kinship with the crude conceptions of the old world concerning a finite god.

To the same level of religious feeling belongs idolatry, a phenomenon of world-wide diffusion, for

[1] Hierocl. *Comm. Carm. Aur.* ad fin.

which more than one explanation can be suggested. Primitive thought could easily argue that as the earthly ruler might delight in seeing images of himself erected in his realm, so might the superhuman ruler or deity. For vanity is a deep-seated motive in man, and has frequently prompted his imagination when imputing attributes and emotions to his God. And something like this must have been in the mind of the Greeks when they called their statues ' agalmata ', ' things that the Gods delighted in '. Certainly a deity who was the primal source of Beauty might delight in a Greek statue ; but this could hardly be said of those of most other nations. This, then, might be one motive appealing to an artistically gifted people. But primitive psychology suggests another which we may call magico-religious, the same that has been noted above, the desire to compel or attract the distant deity to visit the spot where his worshippers needed him. And the carved semblance could be regarded as a potent spell and could convince the anxious votary of the real presence, especially at that level of mind where the distinction between illusion and reality is blurred. We could prove this to be the dominant motive for the emergence of idolatry in Greece, if the theory that I tried to demonstrate long ago is now regarded as certain, that the iconic statue was evolved little by little from the sacred pillar ; for this latter had long been held to be a powerful magnet for drawing divinity down and into itself, so that all that the earliest sculptor had to do was to allow certain forms

of the anthropomorphic deity imprisoned within the pillar shyly to peep forth; until at last the pillar was wholly transmuted into a beautiful human shape. This theory of the origin of idolatry may have been true of other Mediterranean races that were devoted to pillar-worship, but must not be taken as universally true. The original motive for image-carving in Egypt may have been the desire to provide the deity with a material body, as the portrait-statue served that purpose for the deceased Egyptian. Thus, after Ptah, the Creator, 'had made likenesses of their bodies to the satisfaction of their hearts', 'the Gods entered into their bodies of every wood and every stone and every metal'.[1] But one general statement concerning idolatry may be confidently put forth, that, when the idol was established as an important adjunct of ritual, it meant much more to the early peoples and means more to many of the present day than a mere semblance of the divinity, more than an artistic expression helping the imagination to realize him more vividly. This is all that it need stand for in the minds of the more cultivated; and on this view it may be possible to reconcile to it the higher religious thought. But from ancient Greece, Rome, Asia Minor, Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, and Mexico, not to mention the innumerable records concerning modern and ancient savages, we have ample proof that the idol was regarded as full of the mystic

[1] Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, p. 46.

essence of the deity, charged with his power and activity, and binding him to dwell among his people. Hence arose such practices as smearing the idol with blood or placing food in its hands or mouth to maintain its divine life, of clothing it with beautiful robes, washing and purifying it at intervals, chaining it to the spot to prevent it running away, carrying it about to visit the sick or the crops, flogging it, cursing it, or otherwise maltreating it when it failed to give aid, stealing it from the enemy so as to compel their deity in whom they trusted to desert them. All or some of these practices are recorded of the civilized races mentioned above, and some are being practised in Europe and India to-day.[1] It is only this aspect of idolatry, not the philosophic view of it as a mere artistic semblance or symbolic expression of God's attributes, that explains the fierce hostility against it kindled in the minds of the early Judaic teachers of monotheism, a feeling inherited in its fullest intensity by Mahomet and Moslemism. We can distinguish two strains in this hostility: certain Biblical texts reveal the conviction that the idol is a magical imposture, leading the people away from the true God: 'eyes have they and see not, ears have they and hear not', and similar expressions are found in the *Qur'an*: there is also the conviction, arising from a sense of awe congenial to the highest religious consciousness, that the mystery of the unapproachable God was degraded

[1] Note the account of the idolatry in the Çaiva faith of Southern India given by Pope, *The Tiruvāçagam*, p. xxxv.

and profaned by any representation of him in the form of man or animal.

Of the higher world-religions the only two that have remained consistently non-idolatrous are the Judaic and the Islamic. The same severity was imputed by some ancient authorities to the old Persian religion and to the inspired doctrines of Zarathustra; and modern Parsism is against the cult of images, of which we cannot wholly acquit their ancestors in spite of Herodotus' attestation. The history of Christendom in this matter has been strange and tragic. The early church upheld for a time the Judaic ideal; but the spirit of the Hellenic and Mediterranean idol-lover triumphed soon over the spirit of Moses; the resistance of the Byzantine iconoclastic emperors was futile; and the popular religion of Christendom, except within the shrinking borders of Puritan Protestantism, must to-day be called idolatrous. In this phenomenon, very obvious before our eyes, we may discern a proof that the popular mind is incapable of reaching or at least of abiding by the concept of an omnipresent infinite God; and only from the concrete image which we must call fetichistic can we gather a convincing perception of the helpful nearness of the deity. And if we must regard idolatry as deleterious to the more spiritual religion, we should recognize that in its most brilliant manifestation, namely in Greek polytheism, however it may have impeded the highest religious developments, it nevertheless bore fruit of rich value for the human soul. For it pro-

duced the most beautiful and noble religious art that the world has yet seen ; an art which we must regard as a powerful and creative expression of the higher nature of the divinity, imprinting on its different forms of deity the ideas of peaceful power combined with dignity and wisdom, purity, gentleness, and at times even a radiant benevolence. It purified and elevated the popular imagination by banishing the grotesque and cruel forms of demonology, and thus while clarifying the polytheism, it undoubtedly helped to prolong its lease of life. Finally, among its fruitful religious effects, we may be allowed to reckon the prominence given to the idea in Greek and specially in Platonic philosophy that Beauty is one of the essential attributes of God. Nor were the temple-images that were the masterpieces of Greek sculpture used for any debasing magic. Even the Roman mind could be thrilled and uplifted by the spectacle of Zeus at Olympia, the world's masterpiece : it was felt ' to have added something to the received religion ' : it was felt, to use the words of Keats about the Elgin marbles, as ' a sun, the shadow of a magnitude '.

Anthropomorphism, then, in its narrower sense, boldly worked out in art by a people of unique art-gifts, has contributed this at least to our civilization. It has also contributed through a long series of ages and in every society of man the ritual of sacrifice. To the cruder anthropomorphic imagination the sacrifice is not only a gift to placate the divinity, a bribe by which to win his favour, as the earthly

ruler may be placated and bribed, but it is necessary sustenance without which the deity, like man, would perish. The Gods need the same sustenance as man, and where men were cannibals or where they had once been cannibals, human victims might be offered as a cannibalistic feast. It is not in the lowest savagery that this ghastly ritual has been found; it is most salient in the ritual of the Aztec culture in Mexico, where the idea that the sun and the other celestial beings had to be sustained by human blood prompted many of the Aztec wars, which were raids to obtain prisoners for human sacrifice. Of this grossest of all forms of the food-sacrifice, to which cruel and morbid ideas concerning the nature of the divinity inevitably attached themselves, no clear traces are to be found among the higher religions of the old world, whether Aryan, Semitic, or Mediterranean.[1] But the food-theory of sacrifice, though usually in a somewhat refined or sublimated form, survived for long ages among them. In the Mesopotamian ritual 'the gods throng like flies to the sacrifice': the gods sniff the smoke of the sacrifice and the incense;[2] and this suggested the less carnal view that it was only the immaterial essence of the burnt-offering that was conveyed by the smoke to the upper heaven.

The same crude idea of the divinity's needs governed the Hellenic and Judaic ritual whether of

[1] There is a hint of it in the legends concerning the Zeus Lukaios ritual in Arcadia; but a different interpretation of it is possible: vide my *Cults*, 1, pp. 41–2. Cf. *Greece and Babylon*, p. 239.

[2] *Greece and Babylon*, p. 241.

first-fruits or the animal-offering, though both forms contained other ideas as well which do not here concern us. Similarly, in India, in spite of the high pitch and lofty conceptions attained by many Vedic hymns, the worshipper, whether priest or layman, was capable of believing that the sun could not arise and fulfil his appointed task unless strengthened by the daily offering of soma: and this naïve belief is morbidly developed by the Indian imagination until at last the sacrifice is itself deified as a great divine power that sustains heaven and earth.

Wherever the food-theory of sacrifice was maintained or survived, or wherever offerings to the God, of whatever kind, were regarded as in some way necessary to supply his wants, the imagination was bound to the lower type of anthropomorphism, and the conception of an infinite self-sufficing Power was impeded. Therefore it marked a momentous progress in religion when protests against the theory and the practice began to arise. And protests arose independently from Greece and Judea from the sixth century onwards. Perhaps the earliest is the verse of Hosea, 'I desired mercy and not sacrifice and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings'.[1] The depreciation of the sacrifice and the fallacy latent in it were never more strikingly expressed than in certain passages of our Psalms: 'If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving

[1] 6. 6.

and pay thy vows unto the Most High.'[1] And again: 'Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required.'[2] Among the utterances of the Greek philosophers of the sixth century we find protests against anthropomorphism in general, and among the fragments of Herakleitos scathing exclamations against the excesses of the Bacchic ritual, purifications from blood, and the folly of idolatry. The tendency of later Greek ethical thought is rather to humanize and moralize sacrifice than to preach its abolition. Thus Euripides denounces the wickedness of the Tauric immolation of the human victim and exposes the blasphemy of imputing man's evil nature to God: he also appears to have the same sentiment as Theophrastos expresses[3] in regard to the blood-sacrifice, namely that it is less pleasing to a merciful God than the harmless oblations of cereals and liquids; in the same passage Theophrastos quotes an utterance of the Delphic Pythoness, conveying the same lesson as the Gospel narrative of the widow's mite, that the simple offerings of the poor are more acceptable than the pompous hekatombs of the rich.[4] Finally one of the latest champions of Paganism, Iamblichus, renounces as unworthy the gift-theory of sacrifice, and justifies it only as a symbol of the friendship between God and man.[5]

[1] 50. 12–14; cf. 51. 16. [2] 40. 6.
[3] Eur. *Frag.* 904; Porphyry, *De Abstin.* 2. 29.
[4] Vide my *Cults*, 4, p. 210. [5] *De Mysteriis*, 5. 9.

It may be that the first strong stand against the whole ritual of sacrifice was taken by the great reforming prophet Zarathustra in the ninth century B. C.; but the evidence is not clearly stated by our recent authorities;[1] it may be that his original thought on the question, giving the true ideal of sacrifice, appears in one verse of the Gathas: 'As an offering Zarathustra brings the life of his own body, the choiceness of good thought, action, and speech, unto Mazdah;' a thought which Moulton well compares with St. Paul's: 'I beseech you . . . that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.'[2]

Of all the external acts of worship that which we are considering has been by far the most momentous for its influence on religious thought and even on the economic life of man. Our moral judgement on it must be double-edged: so far as its forms were cruel and bloody and combined with magic practices, they were likely to engender dark and degrading thoughts concerning the nature and attributes of the deity: where they were refined and merciful, they assisted the higher conception of the Godhead as pure and merciful, such as that of the pure Apollo with the 'pure' altar at Delos, whereon no blood must be shed.[3]

The ritual of the gift-offering to God, either of the fruits of the earth or of the animal life, has not

[1] Vide Moulton, *Early Zoroastrianism*, p. 395, n. 1.

[2] Yasna, 33. 14 (Moulton, *ib.* p. 360).

[3] Vide *Cults*, 4, p. 253.

actually survived in Christendom as an orthodox act of worship. The destruction of the temple at Jerusalem made it impossible for the Jews, though they may still cherish hopes of reviving it if and when their Holy City is restored to them; and they still regard it as commanded them by Jahwé. And the early church, in its desire to break away from Judaism and in its abhorrence of the public ritual of Paganism, was under no temptation to maintain it; we have thus been delivered from the incubus of a ritual which has dominated mankind for thousands of years, and which, springing from a crude anthropomorphism, was always in danger of being associated with harsh or unworthy ideas concerning the attributes of God.

But, as we might expect, the feeling that inspired it has not wholly died out among us, and occasionally manifests itself among our own congregations in quaint and innocent ways: the flock may be appealed to for contributions to the poor or for some gift to the Church of furniture or vestment or decoration as if these were 'gifts to God'. In religion, as elsewhere, what was once literal fact and literal thought, survives in our speech as metaphor; and the history of the word 'sacrifice', which has become a common word of our secular-moral vocabulary, is strangely interesting.

Far more momentous is the influence exercised by the pre-Christian ideas of the sacrifice on one of the fundamental dogmas of our traditional Christology, the dogma interpreting the death of Christ.

To realize this, we must bear in mind that there were other types of sacrifice among the races of the ancient culture than that which has been occupying us above, and other ideas attached to them. A frequent ritual was the piacular sacrifice, the immolation of a victim whose life or whose blood an offended deity might demand or accept as a vicarious substitute for the life of a whole sinful community or one sinful member of it. Much has been written on this form, which is found in the history of all the higher religions and which has left the deepest imprint on religious thought. The working of it was deadly, for it prolonged by its fatal logic the cruelties of human sacrifice in comparatively humane societies long after the crudest and grossest form of it, the cannibalistic, had become impossible except in Mexico. There are various operative causes and therefore various possible explanations of human sacrifice: but doubtless of many of its examples the piacular is the true explanation; many Greek and some Roman legends are sufficient evidence. In normal circumstances an offended deity might be placated by an animal victim, and here the idea of expiation naturally blended with the idea of a gift; for we can expiate our offences against men by a valuable gift and according to the naïve anthropomorphic thought the bull or the ram or the pig was a valuable gift to the divinity. But when the sense of committed sin was strong, ancient thought was moral and logical enough to conceive that a just and angry God might not be satisfied with the blood of an innocent animal

but might well demand a human life as sole atonement for human sin. At times the deity might be duped by a sham human sacrifice, and the fatal ritual might be maintained as a solemn mockery, which imputed a lack of intelligence combined with vindictiveness to the high power. But when some great sin had been committed or some dire peril was impending, a clear token of the wrath of God, the immolation of the actual human life might be peremptorily demanded by the priest or the people. And the more valuable and noble the life the better it could serve as a representative of the whole community and as an expiatory vicarious sacrifice for them. Therefore the King of Moab sacrificed his own son on the walls to his God, and Agamemnon his own daughter to the offended Goddess. For the societies of the ancient Mediterranean culture the evidence comes partly from prehistoric legend ; but legend is often satisfying proof of ritual-fact. And well-attested record proves that the rite was practised on rare occasions and in a few cult-centres in this area even in the historic period and was not wholly extinguished until the second century of the Roman Empire, although for long ages it had become abhorrent to the higher moral sense. The morality underlying the rite and the conception of the divine nature involved in it are at the best crude and at one point savage. The leading idea is vindictive justice, working out the law still potent in our ethics and religion that death is the due punishment for sin. But where the cruel ritual is

or has been habitually maintained, the popular mind is more likely to be evilly impressed with the vindictiveness than with the justice, and to become inclined to demoniacal views of the divinity.

Moreover, the idea of vicarious justice or vengeance is inherited from the savage stage of our race, when morality was tribal, communal, or corporate only, when the sense of individual responsibility had not arisen, when the sin of one affected the whole group, when the savage blood-feud was satisfied with the slaying of any member of the offending tribe although the individual slain may have been wholly innocent of the original offence. Therefore in accepting the vicarious sacrifice the deity is as undiscriminating as the savage; there need be no question of the guilt of the individual slain; only, the nobler and goodlier he is the more acceptable and expiatory he may be. Against this primitive law of vicarious vindictiveness the utterance of Ezekiel sounds as a challenge: 'the soul that sinneth it shall die'. We have risen far above it in our secular law and ethics; but as religion with its instinctive conservatism is the stronghold of ideas extinct elsewhere, the vicarious sacrifice is still a prominent dogma in our religious theory. The origin, development, and effects of this idea in the Christology of the early, medieval, and reformed Christian Churches, have been skilfully and learnedly expounded by Dr. Rashdall in his recent Bampton Lectures.[1] It belongs to our subject only because it concerns the attributes

[1] *On the Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology*, 1919.

of God. And Dr. Rashdall has powerfully shown how the fundamental assumptions involved in it and the various corollaries drawn from it, for instance the grotesque and blasphemous thesis, that the Devil in bringing about the death of Christ, was cleverly tricked by God, have debased the orthodox and popular imagination of the divine character.

It is not merely through the utterances and authority of St. Paul, Irenaeus, and Augustine that such an idea, properly belonging to primitive anthropomorphism, has been able to survive and fructify in our higher theology: we must attribute much to the mentality of the early and later converts won to Christianity from the Pagan world, whose minds were full of the preconceptions deposited by the immemorial religious tradition of centuries. Among the most vigorous and vital of these was the value of piacular sacrifice, of the possibility of the transference of the sins of the community into the scapegoat or 'the pharmakos, the efficacy of purification by blood'. They were ideas connected with a ritual repugnant to our modern sense and with the morality and religious imagination of the prehistoric tribe; yet they are all reflected in the teaching that came to be accepted as orthodox in the Church concerning the death of Christ. Various and subtle have been the attempts of theologians to spiritualize, humanize, and justify these ideas or to recommend them by what is called 're-interpretation'. Some such attempts have even made them the more inhuman, and have given us a

characterization of God the most appalling that the human imagination has conceived; and none of them has succeeded in bridging the gulf that separates them from the higher conception of divinity satisfying the developed modern conscience.

Another product of anthropomorphism that has deeply influenced the history of religion is the attribution to the deity of the distinctions of sex. This was obviously inevitable in our lower phases; nor is it easy to see how advanced religious thought could avoid it, wherever the divinity was felt as an individual person; for all the words in every language denoting persons naturally imply sex and sex-distinctions. The modern religious man, who may not scrutinize his own imagination, and who would probably assent to the great Joannine formula that 'God is a spirit', habitually speaks of him, and the liturgical invocations and phrases in all our churches habitually present him as male. Also the highest and most operative of his attributes are attached to the idea of God the Father, and the concepts of fatherhood and sonship have inspired much of the theology of our race; nor dare we yet say that for the popular mind of to-day these terms are merely symbols or metaphors. They were reflected long ago upon the skies from the human family. The Aryan peoples were familiar with the Father-God at an early period of their history, and all of them, except the Romans, constructed their Pantheon on the type of the human family and mainly on the monogamic type. The Jewish

imagination was singular in this respect: the personality of Jahwé is pre-eminently masculine, of robust virility, a strong patriarchal lord of the world: yet he holds himself sternly aloof from sex-life, though he is no ascetic and does not disapprove of it in men. Mahomet and Moslemism inherited this austere Judaic concept of God and have maintained it most tenaciously: in many striking passages of the *Qu'ran*, the prophet gives utterance to his abhorrence of the belief that God could have a son. In fact, Judaism and Islam are the only world-religions that have been able to keep out the goddess; and therefore they are the only religions that have been able to maintain themselves as pure monotheisms.

But ordinarily the anthropomorphic imagination, when free from sacerdotal or prophetic inhibition was sure to bring in the goddess, as partner or companion of the male god. The phenomenon is world-wide. There were many sources supplying ancient religion that made her inevitable. There was the tendency to construct the divine world on the lines of human society. There was also the observation of many facts and phenomena in the natural world that were explained most naturally as the manifestation of an unseen female potency: hence the emergence of the Earth-Mother and the female forms that embodied the swelling growths of the forest and field. And it was not mere licentiousness, but an imperious call, that stimulated so many communities of the old world to embody the mysteri-

ous power of love as a Love-Goddess. In the teaching of the Indian sect known as the Sakta the whole universe was explained according to the ideas of sex: 'the female aspect is the more fundamental and there is no neuter God.' [1] It was not left for modern psychology to discover the close affinity between the sex-impulse and religion. The imagination of early man was wayward and we cannot reduce it to fixed laws: such phenomena as sun, moon, and evening star he might imagine now as male now as female; but he imagined them in terms of sex, and much of his wayward work remains with us and in us. We need not wonder then that the goddess appears in most religions and in a few has been even predominant.

It has been specially due to the researches and discoveries of Sir Arthur Evans that we have come to realize how dominant in certain areas of the old Mediterranean culture, notably in the Minoan-Mycenaean, was the cult of the Great Goddess, the source of all life in heaven, earth, and sea, imagined now as Mother now as Maid.[2] We may call her by the pre-Hellenic names of Rhea, Cybele, or Britomartis ('the Sweet Maid'). We have reason to believe that Athena, Aphrodite, Artemis of Ephesus were her emanations, made familiar to us in Hellenic legend and cult, and that the Mariolatry

[1] MacNicol, *op. cit.* p. 189.

[2] We must not, however, impute either to the old Minoan or to the later Phrygian religion any clear dogma of a divine Virgin-Mother: vide *Cults*, 3, pp. 305–6.

of Christendom has drawn nourishment from the same source.

The prominence of goddess-cult has been supposed to have a sociologic importance as affecting the social position of women. This is a controversial question which I have dealt with elsewhere.[1] We are here more concerned with the influence it may have had in shaping or colouring our conceptions of the divinity.

The evidence of comparative religion, so far as it has been gathered, justifies us in the induction that the goddess-cult works against monotheism, for the goddess is sure to attach to herself a male associate, whether as spouse or young lover or son: and we know that the monotheism proclaimed by Christianity becomes unreal where Mariolatry is strong. The goddess-cult affects therefore the structure of religion. We may also discern that it gives a peculiar tone and colour to the religious imagination. It may soften the austerities of religion and suffuse it with the spirit of tenderness and sentiment that attaches to the relation of mother and son. It may foster the growth of the ideas of divine mercy and pity, the Mother-Goddess serving as an intercessor between sinful humanity and the wrathful God, just as the human mother pleads often for the child against the anger of the father. Thus, we find in the prayer of Sanherib the

[1] *Arch. f. Relig. Wiss.* 1904, p. 70, 'Sociological hypotheses concerning the position of women in ancient religion'. Cf. also Frazer, *G. B.* 6, pp. 202–12.

expression of a hope that 'Ninlil, the consort of Ashur, the mother of the Great Gods, may daily speak a favourable word for Sanherib, the King of Assyria before Ashur'.[1] It may also produce certain social results of value, as it may help to strengthen the sanctity of the mother's tie and indirectly improve the position of women in the society: a fragment of Attic comedy of the fourth century gives interesting evidence—'for those who have true knowledge of things divine there is nothing greater than the mother; hence the first man who attained culture founded the shrine of the mother'.[2] Also, if and where the goddess is worshipped as virgin and the religious imagination broods on this idea, a strong belief may be quickened in the value of purity as an essential and one of the highest attributes of divinity; whence the dangerous corollary may be drawn that the life of the sexes is intrinsically impure. It will be more convenient to consider the divine attribute of purity later when we are examining the higher moral attributes of the deity.

As regards the general influence of goddess-worship upon religious history, we must note that it has by

[1] Jastrow, *Die Religion Babyloniens und Assyriens*, vol. 1, p. 525.

[2] Alexis in Stobaeus, *Florilegium*, 79. 13 (Meineke, 3, p. 83). Cf. Schiller, *Die Braut von Messina*, Act 4:

> Selber die Kirche, die göttliche, stellt nicht
> Schöneres dar auf dem himmlischen Thron;
> Höheres bildet
> Selber die Kunst nicht, die göttlich geborene,
> Als die Mutter mit ihrem Sohn.

no means always proved itself a humanizing and progressive force. In many communities the goddess, who may be an untamed procreative nature-power with little care for settled life and morality, is found to be more cruel and vindictive than the God, delighting in human sacrifices, and to have a predilection for licentious ritual. Also, of this special anthropomorphic view of the divinity it was a not unnatural consequence that the relations between the worshipper and the deity were expressed in amatory terms; and we have the right to believe that the result of this on the religious imagination has been morbid and deleterious. The marriage between the mortal and the goddess or at times the god, such as was performed in the mystery-ritual of the Great Goddess of Phrygia and in a few Hellenic cults, might be enacted reverently and decently, but cannot be regarded as helpful to the highest elevation of religious thought.[1] Such austere and ideal religions as the early Zarathustrian, Judaism, and Christianity, have worked healthfully in purging the religious imagination of sex-ideas; yet they are reflected in a few mystic or symbolic phrases: it has been found possible and legitimate to speak of the personified church or the individual consecrated nun as 'the Bride of Christ'; in Hosea[2] Israel is presented as 'the Betrothed of Jahwé': 'I will betroth thee unto me for ever;' and in many

[1] For the question of this ritual in Mesopotamia, see my *Greece and Babylon*, p. 265.

[2] 2. 19.

prophetic passages Israel is said to commit adultery, when she goes after strange gods.

It is to this naïve anthropomorphism, imputing sex-life and sex-distinctions to the personages of the divine world that must be ascribed the greater part of that which seems to us repulsive or unworthy in the ancient pre-Christian religions and in some of the present day. In ancient and modern India, in ancient Greece, Anatolia, and Egypt—we may add perhaps, from faint records, ancient Scandinavia also—it has given scope to a licentious mythology. In India, Mesopotamia, and other parts of Asia Minor, though not in Greece, it also gave the cue to what is worse, a licentious ritual. Yet this is one of the many incongruities between religious ordinance and religious thought that such ritual could coexist with the most exalted conceptions of the divine nature, as the student of Indian or Babylonian religious literature is aware. And in spite of the licentiousness of Greek mythology, we find in real Greek cult many ideas of high value and in Homer and other Greek poets much profound and noble religious utterance. For a comparative study of the attributes of Godhead it is important to bear in mind that 'the Mediterranean old-world religions, all save the Hebraic, agreed in regarding the processes of the propagation of life as divine, at least as something not alien or abhorrent to godhead.' [1]

Nevertheless, this sexual anthropomorphism applied too freely and naïvely to the divine world is a fatal

[1] *Greece and Babylon*, p. 282.

stumbling-block to the more ideal conception of divinity. And mystic theosophy has usually regarded such terms as 'male' and 'female' as wholly inadequate to the characterization of the divine nature. 'The Sire, Male, Female, Neither' is a phrase typical of the subtle evasion of Indian thought on the matter.[1] It may be that Zarathustra condemned the attribution of sex-distinctions to the Godhead,[2] though the later Magi were addicted to it. We have noted the singular phenomenon in Judaism and Islam of a solitary High God, most virile and robust, but severely aloof from all sex-association; and this has been one of their grounds of bitter hostility to Christianity, which in Mahomet's view was playing with the looseness of Pagan thought in daring to imagine a Son of God.

We have observed that anthropomorphism, too literally and insistently worked out, brings with it certain grossnesses of imagination, which civilized religion always endeavours to escape. The first outspoken protest in our world-literature comes from the Greek philosopher of Kolophon, Xenophanes of the sixth century.[3] 'Mortals deem that the Gods are begotten as they are and have clothes like theirs and voice and form.' 'If oxen or horses and lions had hands and could paint with their hands and produce works of art as men do, horses

[1] Pope, *Tamil Texts*, p. 57 (in the Hymn of Tiru Vāçagan, v. xxix). [2] Moulton, *Early Zoroastr.* p. 413, n. 3.

[3] Diel's *Fragments*, 14–25; Burnett's *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 119.

would paint the forms of the Gods like horses and oxen like oxen, and make their bodies in the image of their several kinds.' 'One God, the greatest among gods and men, neither in form like unto mortals nor in thought.' 'He sees all over, thinks all over, and hears all over.' 'But without toil he swayeth all things by the thought of his mind.'

This protest of an early Ionic philosopher is of more value on its negative than on its positive side; for he does not clearly indicate how he imagines God. He appears to regard him as a Power working chiefly by thought and as possessing in a superhuman degree all our faculties but none of our sense-organs whereby we exercise them.

It is interesting to observe this and similar attempts made by the human mind to escape from the strong reflection of the human self—a confused but magnanimous effort. As the human form may appear to the earnest thinker inadequate for the high Deity, the religious imagination might express the transcendence of the divine power and nature by distorting and mis-shaping our type with symbolic intention; as, to take an example from Indian idolatry, by the addition of four or six arms to the human trunk, or, from the Egyptian, by the omission of ears, whereby the truth is proclaimed that God can hear without ears. But this crude symbolism, playing tricks with our given type, has always an evil effect on the religious imagination, tending to produce bizarre and monstrous forms and thoughts.

There is another and better escape for our imagina-

tion, while it is still conditioned by the necessity of embodying its deity in some form : namely to resolve the divine body into the vaguest and most immaterial substance, such as ether or light. It may have been an original thought of Zarathustra that Porphyry preserves when he gives it as a Magian dogma that ' the body of Ahura is like the Light and his soul like Truth '.[1] The thought in the *Qur'an* is not far from this, expressed in the verse ' God is the Light of the Heavens and the earth '.[2] Similarly in the musings of a Greek or Latin poet we may find the Highest God identified with the ether. But such embodiment of God, or such partial identification of him with some vast and pervasive cosmic element, suggests a certain mode of thought that may tend towards pantheism, of which the issues and implications may have to be considered later.

Another escape from anthropomorphism, that is more in keeping with the highest spiritual view, is provided by the dogma, of which the germ lay in early animism but which is an advanced achievement of human thought, that God is a disembodied personality, pure spirit ; a perception of him made familiar to us through the Joannine utterance quoted above ' God is a Spirit ; and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth '. And St. Augustine evidently regarded this as the highest and truest notion, when he confesses that in his unorthodox days ' I did not know that God was a spirit, not One who hath parts extended in length

[1] *Vit. Pyth.* 41. [2] 24. 35.

and breadth or whose being was bulk '.[1] He might have learned this from thinkers of other ages and creeds. The religious terminology of early Zarathustrianism implies it; for Ahura Mazda is Spirit or Mainyu. It appears in some Greek speculation both poetical and philosophical. That God is pure mind, possibly the same mind as the mind of man, is a thought that seems to have attracted Euripides, in two of whose utterances it appears—' the mind in each one of us is God ',[2] and again, ' O Thou that stayest the Earth and hast thy firm throne thereon, whoso'er thou art, baffling to man's conjecture, whether thou art Zeus or the Necessity of Nature, or the Mind of Man '.[3] Somewhat on the same plane is the Aristotelian definition of God, both that which is imputed to him by Sextus Empiricus, ' God is incorporeal, the bounding line of the Heavens' (giving them limit and form)[4] and the fuller and more authentic definition in the *Metaphysics*—' God is an eternal living personality, having perpetual energy, but without bulk (or spatial dimensions) '.[5] The curious theologic concept expressed by Plutarch[6] is in harmony with this view, namely that the divine soul or ' psyche ' which is an element of the complex personality of God is the ' organon ' of his whole Being, that whereby He fulfils his various functions, just as the material body is man's ' organon '.

[1] *Confessions*, Bk. III. 7; cf. VI. 3.
[2] Nauck, *Trag. Graec. Frag.* 1018.
[3] *Troades*, 884.
[4] Ὑποτυπ. 3. 218; πρὸς Φυσικούς. β, § 33.
[5] *Met.* 1072.
[6] *Sept. Sap. Conv.* p. 163 E.

This idea of God as pure spirit has borne practical and vitalizing fruit in religion. It has not, indeed, been of much avail in diminishing ritual and ceremony or in restraining the tendency to erect shrines, as the speaker of the Joannine phrase and as Origen may perhaps have hoped.[1] But it has undoubtedly quickened the feeling that man's relation to God is mainly a spiritual relation, and the deity's action upon man is mainly action upon his soul. Hence religion could become more inward and—as we say—more spiritual. This is the trend of its development in the prophetic and post-exilic periods of Israel, when we hear less about cornfields and vineyards and more about the heart and the soul. We mark the same trend when we trace out Indian religious thought from the Vedic period to the medieval and modern. We find it marked also in the Hellenic. That, God being spirit, all man's spiritual life, all his mental activity is an inspiration or influx from a divine source, is a natural, though not an inevitable, deduction which mature reflection may draw. It is strange to find it in so early a poem as the *Odyssey* already uttered in clear and impressive phrase—'The mind (or the thoughts) of mortal men is even such as the Father of Gods and men brings to him from day to day'.[2] It was long, however, before any thinker proved himself aware of the perplexing consequences that such a view might involve; for it contains the potentiality of such a dogma as that God is the source of our evil thoughts as of our good,

[1] Vide Inge, *op. cit.* 2, p. 195. [2] *Od.* 18. 136.

a dogma repellent to Zarathustrian and Hellenic ethical-religious thought, but accepted by the later speculation of Jewish Rabbis. And it may be from Judaic sources that the prophet of Islam drew the conviction that 'it is not easy for any person to believe save by the permission of God'[1] and that 'God leads astray whom he pleases and guides whom he pleases'.[2] This idea crystallizes and hardens in Calvinism, where all the difficulties connected with predestination and free will are brought to a head.

Again, in proportion as the aspect of God as pure spirit, working upon the world of spirits by unseen spiritual agency, becomes dominant, the belief is sure to arise that He knows all the secrets of the heart of man and that sins of thought are equally grievous in his judgement as sins of action: hence human ethics may come to depend rather on inward than on outward standards; and purity of soul rather than outward prosperity will become the main object of prayer. And from the view that God is spirit and that 'like is known by like', the idea may naturally arise that, not by ritual or magic, but only by the power of the human spirit or soul does man enter into communion with God: a kindred and equally momentous consequence may be drawn that only in his own soul can man find final and satisfying proof of the reality of God.

The utterance of these ideas is broadcast among the higher nations. We have already noted one or two examples in Greek thought and literature: 'the

[1] *Qur'an*, 10. 100. [2] 74. 34.

soul of each one of us is God' : 'the soul is the dwelling-place of divine spirit' : 'God has no more fitting abode on earth than the pure soul.' We are reminded of the enigmatic Gospel-phrase, 'The Kingdom of God is within you' ; and of the medieval injunction *in te quaere.* The Chinese philosopher Shas Yung (A. D. 1011) has expressed the idea in a verse that enriches our religious poetry :

> The heavens are still : no sound :
> Where then shall God be found ?
> Search not in distant skies—
> In man's own heart he lies.[1]

The subject here adumbrated is too vast for us to pursue, and has only concerned us at this point, because in considering anthropomorphism and its various manifestations and implications it was relevant to consider the ways whereby certain higher religious thought has endeavoured to escape from its felt incongruities. And to deny that God has any substance like to our human, and to deny that he has any substance at all save pure spirit, appealed to many as a higher solution. Yet this mode of escape is by no means sure even for those who can tread firmly in the cloudland of abstractions. In imagining the deity as a purely spiritual power or personality, we may avoid the grosser, more material, anthropomorphism of the old world ; but our conception of him may still be, as it is called, anthropopathic : we may clothe it with attributes of our own intellectual and emotional life, and may attribute

[1] Giles, *Religion of Ancient China*, p. 58.

to the High Spirit the potentialities of wrath, pity, love, and even suffering.[1] In that case, in fashioning our divine ideal we have discarded the human body but have reflected upon it the human soul. In fact no one has ever been able to imagine a divine personal power that in its nature, attributes, and activity was wholly non-human; also, we find that the farther the ideal recedes from the human sphere the less is its value for real and practical religion.

By its votaries the high-pitched theory of God as pure spirit is probably unattainable; at least this would be no adequate account of the popular cognition of him in the great world-religions. It is needless to repeat that the ancient peoples of Mesopotamia, India, Anatolia, Egypt, and Greece, strongly embodied their deities in form and shape drawn from the material world: the shape might shift and change, might be blent of human or bestial traits: but the deities that dominated their imagination were concrete and complex individuals with transcendent souls and bodies. This is equally true as an account of the Hebrew god of the earlier as of the more developed period. There is real truth and no mockery in the vivid appreciation of him in one of Heine's strongest poems, noted by Matthew Arnold, in which a Jew justifies his faith against a Christian—'Our God is not Love . . . Our God, he is alive and

[1] It is curious to note how some of the leaders of the Gnostic heresy, while peopling their spiritual world with bloodless abstractions, sometimes attach to these gross sexual myths and sexual allegory: vide Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, 1, p. 178.

in his hall of heaven he goes on existing away throughout all the eternities. Our God is a God in robust health, not pale and thin as sacrificial wafers. . . . Our God is strong. In his hand he upholds sun, moon, and stars: thrones break, nations reel to and fro, when he knits his forehead.' On the whole this vivid account of the tremendous personality of Jahwé accords with the impression that the whole of the Old Testament makes on our imagination; and the same robust and virile personality dominates the Koran. And throughout medieval Christendom the old Judaic imagination of the severe, white-haired elder survived in at least the popular mind with by no means happy results for religious feeling and theology.

Therefore the Joannine dictum has been an esoteric dogma, available only for *élite* minds. The Stoic view of God as possessing substance[1] was nearer to the popular perception than the Platonic or Aristotelian. And the Roman pontifex Scaevola showed a true judgement of the popular psychology when with the practical aims of a conservative he blamed Greek and Roman philosophy for proclaiming that 'the semblances of deity fashioned by the different states are false, that the true God has no sex or age and no definite corporeal members'.[2]

[1] The Stoics' God is a *νοερὸν σῶμα*: vide Bevan, *Stoics and Sceptics*, p. 41. This Stoic view may have coloured Tertullian's doctrine: vide Kidd, *History of the Church*, 1, p. 329, quoting Tertull. *Adv. Prax.* c. vii: 'Quis enim negabit Deum corpus esse, etsi Deus spiritus est.'

[2] Aug. *De Civ. Dei*, 4. 27.

So strong and so inevitable has been the influence of anthropomorphism on the human mind: nor can we imagine a vital religion that could wholly escape from it. It may appear that Buddhism in its purest forms succeeded, but only in so far as it dispensed altogether with a personal god. And a religion without a personal god has not yet been found to be a living and enduring force.

## III

## POLYTHEISM AND MONOTHEISM

A FULL and philosophic consideration of the attributes of God as presented in the various world-religions cannot avoid the question at issue between polytheism and monotheism. For though it may be logically questionable whether we ought to include unity and plurality among the attributes which we attach to the concept of divinity, yet a careful study of the two systems in the world's religious history reveals that the polytheistic and monotheistic trend of thought may seriously affect the view taken concerning the essential qualities of the deity; not only may we find that some are lacking under the one system which are prominent under the other, but also that some, though common to both, are more naturally emphasized and developed under the one than under the other. Therefore the subject is as relevant here as it is certainly interesting in itself.

Comparative religion and anthropology are sometimes called upon to answer the question whether polytheism or monotheism was the prior fact in the early evolution of religion. Leaving aside the present-day statistics of the civilized communities, for these are of doubtful interpretation, we have some trustworthy record of the higher races back to

the fifth or sixth millennium B. C.; we have also the valuable data collected by the modern science of anthropology concerning the primitive communities of the past and present. Some slight evidence from this latter source has induced some students in this field, such as Andrew Lang and one or two others, to believe that some kind of primitive monotheism, merely in the sense of the worship of one god only, was found in man's earliest theistic consciousness; a phenomenon which might be explained as a revelation of divine truth vouchsafed to the earliest races or as due to some social condition of their life. Such a social condition was thought to be totemism, the theory being that, as each clan only had one totem and the totem was worshipped, each clan could only worship one totem-god, which is a crude monotheism. But more recent anthropology has destroyed all value in this reasoning at least: it has been shown that totemistic tribes do not normally worship their totem at all, and that totemistic tribes may have many gods or godlings or none. The theory of Andrew Lang, however, was unaffected by this fallacy, and based on testimony of the recognition by some aboriginal tribes in Australia and elsewhere of a supreme and kindly spirit. But the evidence concerning this, such as it was, in no way came near to supporting any such dogma as that monotheism was a primeval tradition of our race. We can hardly credit the mind of primitive man with a faculty for grasping the idea of one deity of the world. Much that we perceive

as one the savage mind tends to pluralize; the savage pluralizes his inner self or soul into many souls, the sun in heaven into many suns. When he reached the theistic stage, so many strands had gone to the making of a god that it is unlikely that his imagination would project and maintain a solitary divine power.

In fact, the sources that gave life to polytheism were manifold and are still active. Animism and fetichism would evolve an indefinite plurality of spirit-powers vaguely conceived as personal; and certain groups might crystallize into one definite deity, but there were many groups and it was therefore natural that many deities should emerge. Again, nature-worship has prevailed at certain times in every community of man; and the imagination of the ages has peopled the visible world with deities of air, earth, fire, and sea. The feeling that much in nature was weird, awful, and powerful—the feeling that is one of the elemental sources of religion—was more likely to be associated with the perception of its infinite manifoldness than of any underlying unity in it. Even when the primitive mind by a singular achievement can reach to the latter idea, as the Algonquins of North America have achieved the idea of 'Wakondah', this does not necessarily or immediately make for monotheism; 'Wakondah', for instance, could be conceived as the permeating vital force that sustains the life of gods, men, and natural objects.

Although we have been rescued from the fallacy

that ensnared Herbert Spencer and others that ancestor-worship and hero-worship was the foundation of all religion, there is no doubt that it has been an independent and prolific source of polytheism; for the heroized ancestor under favourable conditions could rise to the status of a high god, as a court-physician rose in Egypt, and as we may believe was the career of the Hellenic Asklepios: and in parts of Christendom the local saint might count so much for the village-community as to entitle him to the status and designation of a local god. The tendency to heroize or deify the illustrious dead was very rife in many areas of ancient culture; and though it might be reconciled with monotheism, its natural trend was polytheistic.

Again, when two or more tribes or races coalesced they would bring their tribal or local divinities into the new community, and polytheism would be increased.

We understand, then, the world-wide diffusion of the phenomenon, which is attested by the ancient records of most of the 'Aryan' and Semitic and other Anatolian societies and of Egypt. And we are inclined without any minute examination of these religions to believe that men's views about God and his attributes are likely to be different under a polytheistic system from those prevalent under monotheism. On the whole, this is true. For polytheism is not so likely to engender the atmosphere in which the highest religious emotions, such as awe and reverence, and the highest conceptions of

the majesty and omnipotence of the deity will spontaneously develop. It is certainly not true to say that 'a definite moral system is irreconcilable with a multiplicity of gods'; [1] for the polytheism may be well organized under a supreme god and on an advanced moral basis; nor is there any lack of high moral ideas in the polytheistic cults of Greece and Babylon. But as any particular polytheism always contains in it the deposits of many different periods, scarcely any is moralized all through, especially as many nature-deities are hard to moralize and discipline. Therefore backward or even degraded ideas will still attach to certain of the personalities, while others have been refined and idealized according to the demands of high religion. Side by side with a High God of Justice, Mercy and Truth, the cults of a goddess of sensual love, a God of intoxicating drink, or of thieves and liars, might be maintained. Also, in any large pantheon of gods and goddesses, the sex-motive is likely to be prominent and to taint the mythology and at times the cults. In respect of the mythology, though on the whole not of the cults, this was true in Hellenism, and true in respect of both in India.

Again, it is difficult under polytheism even for the higher minds and practically impossible for the lower to arrive at the conception of a single Providence ruling the world by fixed laws: the multitude of divinities suggests the possibility of discord in the divine cosmos; and instils a sense of the

[1] MacNicol, *Indian Theism*, p. 18.

capricious and incalculable in the unseen world, a hankering after gross miracles and partisan-favours. As compared with the Indian, the Babylonian, and the Egyptian, the Greek polytheism is far more carefully organized and the dogma of the supremacy of Zeus and the subordination of the other deities to his will is proclaimed from Homer downwards throughout the higher literature. Even Apollo at Delphi only speaks as his mouthpiece; even the mighty Athena in behalf of her beloved Athens can only try to mediate, but cannot wholly avert, the destruction of the city by the Persians, which was the will of Zeus. But the popular mind could not live up to the height of such a dogma. In many a legend the caprice, the love or hatred, of a minor divinity is allowed to work irresponsibly. In Euripides' *Hippolytus*[1] the pure and austere Artemis explains why she did not save her favourite hunter and votary from the cruel guile of Aphrodite by the naïve assertion: 'it is a custom for us Gods that no one should thwart the will of another but should stand aside.' Euripides knew that this was not true, according to the best religious belief in Greece; but he chooses to emphasize a weak spot in polytheism, which was undoubtedly there. In the Babylonian version of the Flood, after that destructive catastrophe the Babylonian deities rebuke the cruelty and injustice of Bel who caused it; but they had never thought of hindering his purpose.

Finally, we must reckon among the drawbacks of

[1] ll. 1329–30.

polytheism the demonology that has tainted most of the historical religions of this type. Some of the imagined personalities that peopled the wild places of the earth in the animistic period of thought were dangerous, vindictive, and terrifying; they might come to take definite shape as goblins or as gods; but the god with such ancestry would be likely to retain much of the goblin, a dangerous and cruel character associated perhaps with a cruel ritual, making it the more difficult for the worshipper to arrive at the high plane of religious thought where divinity at once implies love. The deities of destruction loom large in Indian and are manifest in Egyptian polytheism, while it is only in the Greek that they are scarcely discernible. Belief in goblins may survive under monotheism; but it is only polytheism that could admit the goblin as a god.

These are serious drawbacks; and yet we cannot deny after sympathetic comparative study that these creeds have contributed much not only to civilization but to advanced religion. In the first place, it might be easier under polytheistic than under monotheistic thought to interfuse the whole of human life and the whole of the outside world with the presence of divinity. At least, under such a polytheism as the Greek, the power of pluralized divinity was more penetrative throughout the whole range of social and private life and the elements of nature, each sphere and each department having its special deity active and efficient there, than has hitherto been the case under our higher and austerer creed: hence,

while our politics, law-courts, art, and science are mainly secular, in Hellenic communities they were ostensibly religious or tinged with religion; and whether or not this was a real and helpful inspiration, it built up a concept of the divine nature, which while falling far short of ours in majesty and love, surpassed it in richness and fullness of function.

It may well be also that polytheism goes more naturally than the monotheism of which we have as yet had experience, with that emotional mood, to us inevitably seeming a fact of ultimate value, which we may call *joie de vivre*. We have been made familiar in our generation, especially by the writings of Mannhardt and Sir James Frazer, with a widespread vegetation-ritual that goes back to the beginnings of the culture of the tilth and the woodland. It arose in polydaimonism, was developed and sometimes refined by polytheism, but is frowned upon or barely tolerated under a severe monotheism. Much of it was uncouth and repulsive; but that which was associated with the home-bringing of the corn or the vintage was capable of forms of worship not without grace and beauty; in the Bacchic service it evoked moods of ecstatic self-abandonment which in the poetry of Euripides seem to be tingling with the joy of living and with the intoxicating sense of the bursting life of the wild earth. We know what the Bacchic orgy was in its aboriginal home of Thrace, cruel and dangerous, and certainly not to be regarded as a religious asset; but we know that in Greece by some miraculous trans-

formation it blossomed into Attic tragedy and inspired such a drama as the 'Bacchai'.

It would be rash and unscientific to maintain that the different output achieved on the one hand by the Judaic and Islamic genius in the sphere of nature-poetry and on the other hand by the Greek and later Europe inheriting from the Greek, is due to the difference between the monotheistic and polytheistic point of view. We must reckon much with the temperamental differences of the races. It happened that in Greece polytheism was the religion of a people dowered with singular poetic creativeness. If the medley of nature-powers are regarded as daimonic, their terror and their savagery may check the rise of a poetic nature-sense: the wood-goblin may engender, not poetry, but very bad wood-magic. But, happily, by the refining force of the old Greek popular imagination, the divine beings that haunted the meadow, the grove, the water, and the mountain, had been idealized, humanized, and made beautiful after the type of such forms as Linos, Hyakinthos, Kore, and the 'Nymphs' or 'Brides'. The belief then in the presence of such beings within or behind the material object or element would impart a certain thrilling force to that object, as if something beyond this world, beyond our common and earthly experience, were there; and this transcendant feeling could still cleave strongly to certain phenomena and aspects of nature long after the polytheistic belief had passed away; a deposit from an older creed in the poet's brain,

shaping and inspiring his interpretation of nature, so that a primrose must always remain more than a yellow primrose, and the rainbow, where once Iris walked, can never be reckoned ' in the catalogue of common things '.

On this view, our poetic intuition of nature, one of the most delightful inheritances of our spirit, owes a deep debt to a primitive animism, purified and transformed by Greek polytheism. Therefore, when our medieval and modern poets, such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, and Keats are found continually drawing on this Pagan religion as they give voice to the beauty and charm of the world of nature, this is no literary convention but a half-conscious yearning back to the ancestral source of their inspiration. There is earnestness in the strange admission of the high-minded pantheistic Wordsworth that he would rather have been a Pagan ' suckled in some creed outworn ' if only he might have ' glimpses that might leave him less forlorn '. And when Milton as the austere and monotheistic Puritan bans the creations of Greek polytheism in his *Ode to the Nativity* and informs us that

The lonely mountains o'er,
And the resounding shore,
A voice of weeping heard and loud lament :
From haunted spring and dale
Edged with poplar pale
The parting Genius is with sighing sent.
With flower-inwoven tresses torn
The Nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn—

we feel that this is matter for profound regret for

the other Milton, the Milton of Shakespeare's England, and of the Pagan Renaissance, the author of *Lycidas*, *L'Allegro*, and *Il Penseroso*.

We can indeed theoretically and without difficulty reconcile this poetic mood and interpretation of Nature with an ethical monotheism such as the Judaic. We can recall many great passages in our Psalms and the Book of Job that interfuse the sublimer phenomena of nature with the might and the majesty of the One God. We shall find in the monotheistic hymn of Ikhnaton a deep sense of the beauty of nature. But as a matter of history the foster-mother of this mood in us is to be sought elsewhere, namely in Greek polytheism.

As it is part of our subject to consider the influence upon our own history of any particular aspect or imputed attribute of God, it is relevant to enregister the contribution of a polytheistic creed to our poetic endowment. We have considered already the momentous part that Greek idolatry has played in the history of our art.

Moreover, it can be historically maintained that among the advantages that may attach to the belief in the plurality of divine beings we must reckon its greater compatibility with the spirit of tolerance. The religious history of intolerance and its causes has still to be written. We can imagine, though history does not show us, a most elevated monotheism that enjoined upon its adherents the most complete tolerance for those who held a different view about the divine nature. Or again, if the separate groups

of the faithful in Judaea, Islam, or Christendom had been capable of rising to the height of Varro's thought,[1] namely, that the name whereby the High God was called was a matter of entire indifference, and that the different nations could be regarded as worshipping the same High God under different names, we might have received the tradition of a tolerant monotheism. As it is, the monotheism that we know has written its intolerance in letters of blood across our history, from the time when first the tribes of Israel burst into the land of Canaan. We find the evil spirit again in Islam ; and if we impute the phenomenon to the natural ferocity of the Semitic temper, then when we find it darkening the history of Christendom we may discern here the influence of the Judaic tradition. We may touch on this question again. For the present, it concerns us to consider whether the grace of tolerance inheres naturally in polytheism as a system or only happens to be found in certain polytheisms because of the geniality and moderation of the worshippers. We all agree that intolerance is a vice ; whether tolerance is a virtue or not may depend on the principle that animates it ; but it is in any case a fosterer of peace and an inestimable social gain. And the history of the Greek communities proves that they had it in fuller measure than any other civilized society. We regret the misunderstood execution of Socrates, the

[1] Aug. *De Cons. Ev.* 1. 22. 30 : 'Varro Deum Judaeorum Jovem putavit, nihil interesse censens quo nomine nuncuparetur, dum eadem res intelligatur.'

expulsion from Athens of Anaxagoras for imputed atheistic doctrines, and we mark the outburst of wild rage in the Athenian people on the occasion of the mutilation of the Hermai. But these are only faint ripples in the placid surface. The spirit of fanaticism becomes dangerous and homicidal when it eggs on the worshippers to aggressive wars against peoples of alien cults and when it justifies as pleasing to its god the cruelties inflicted on the conquered. This is the spirit of old Israel and of Islam. No Hellenic deity enjoined a religious war or justified cruelty to the conquered. Therefore the history of Greece, in spite of so many stains, makes much brighter reading than our own; and the tolerant genius of Greek and Graeco-Roman civilization might adopt as its device the pregnant words of Tiberius, 'Deorum injuriae Dis curae.' This advantage must to some extent be imputed to the cooler and more evenly balanced temper of the Greek who made religion his servant rather than his master, and also to the religious thought that was congenial to the higher spirits of his race. The High God of Greece was never a jealous god, and generally more merciful and pitiful than the early Jahwé. Also the pre-Christian Hellene was wholly free from that strange obsession which fell upon early Christendom and has not yet passed away; the belief, namely, that the acceptance of a certain religious metaphysic was necessary to salvation and that disbelief was a heinous sin to be punished cruelly in this world and the next. The Greek had no religious books and no

metaphysical religious creed. Therefore he could be tolerant without even knowing that he was.

We can see too in tribal polytheism that there is a certain logic making for tolerance. The tribal deities could not feel insulted because other tribes worshipped others; and if two tribes were fused their deities could easily be fused into a fellowship. A plurality of deities, in fact, has always room for more; and under the Hellenistic monarchs the Greeks were willing to adopt Iao, the Jewish God, into their pantheon; and in the Roman Imperial period a semi-Pagan emperor was willing to admit Christ into his galaxy of gods and heroes.

To some extent we may pass the same judgement on Indian polytheism. On the whole Brahmanism has been tolerant of new cults. The long history of Indian religion is much taken up with the story of the diffusion of countless sects, each proclaiming its own special deity as worthy of prime devotion. Yet we scarcely hear of religious wars in India until the arrival of Moslemism; and we cannot take any modern fanatical temper that may be noted there as characteristic of ancient India. The earlier religious struggle which ended in the triumph of Brahmanism over Buddhism does not seem to have been marked by such sanguinary ferocity as characterized the religious wars of Christendom.

As regards Mesopotamia many of the records of its polytheism and the royal chronicles reveal the same religious justification of cruelty that disfigure the Jewish annals; and this may be a race-mark

of the Semites. On the Moabite stone King Mesha speaks just as Samuel or Joshua might have spoken; having taken the city of Nebo and slaughtered all within its walls, women and children with the men, he feels he has done his religious duty, 'for I had devoted it all to Chemosh', his tribal god. This is fanaticism pure and simple. The Athenians murdered the men of Melos, but they were not proud of it, and they did not dedicate their victims' lives as an acceptable sacrifice to their goddess. The difference goes deep. But it is doubtful if we may call the Moabites more polytheistic than pre-exilic Israel: they may have been as devoted to a sole tribal god, Chemosh, as the Israelites were to Jahwé. Certainly their temper seems the same. And we note a certain ferocity of temper combined with religious fervour in some of the inscriptions of Assurbanipal; we may call this fanaticism, yet in the old history of polytheistic Mesopotamia we do not find, in the strict sense, wars of religion, or the idea of a 'jealous' god that gives its most deadly cue to fanaticism.[1]

A survey of the facts of the Egyptian religion may yield the same induction. Apart from the temper of the people, its polytheism contained within it no principle of intolerance: only a village or community that was fervently devoted to a special animal-god might be infuriated against another village that treated that animal with disrespect. It is only when Amenhotep IV established a pure monotheism,

[1] I have discussed the question slightly more at length in *Greece and Babylon*, pp. 199–200.

the sole and exclusive worship of the sun-god, Aton, that now the idea emerges of a jealous god that endeavours to extirpate all religion save his own. But the priesthood and the people could not live up to the height of this monotheistic creed, and the exclusive cult with the dynasty that favoured it was soon overthrown.

It would not be relevant to consider here the philosophic trend of polytheism, and the question which of the two views of the divine world is most in harmony with the highest philosophic interpretation of the cosmos. This is a difficult problem for metaphysics and science. But to complete and further enlighten our present inquiry it is necessary to consider the facts of monotheism.

When we speak of monotheism, we think immediately and primarily of the Hebrew religion. But the question at once arises whether in the world's civilization this is proved to be the earliest and purest type. We must also be exact in our definition of monotheism ; and must mark its gradations from a lower to a higher, from a narrower to a universal sense. Monotheism is obviously the worship of one God and one alone ; but he may be worshipped as one, only in the sense that the tribe or the community recognize him alone and admit no other deity into their society. At the same time they may believe that other tribes have other deities and that these are real, but hostile or at least of no concern to themselves. This is the narrowest form of monotheism, which we may call tribal. The religion that expresses

this idea may be of high ethical value, but is sure to contain crudities and to lack philosophic significance ; for it need not be linked with any idea of the unity of the divine world or of the whole cosmos. It is not enough to say : ' I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have none other Gods but me.' Had the words run, ' There are no other gods but me ', they would have been the final utterance of universal monotheism, the assertion of the great dogma that in the whole cosmos there is but one God, one personal divine power.

Now it has been shown clearly and conclusively by recent theological scholars[1] that, while some of the people of Israel were always polytheists even after the Exile, the higher religion at its best was in its earlier stages only ' monolatric ', merely the exclusive service of one god, in the spirit of tribal monotheism, and of a god specially afflicted with the lower human passion of jealousy, recognizing and at the same time hating the gods of other nations ; and still every Sunday such crude and obsolete phrases are repeated in our churches, as : ' For the Lord thy God is a jealous God and visits the sins of the fathers upon the children.'

Expansion and development came at length from the inspiration of the Hebrew prophets, in whom at last the idea emerges and gathers strength of a universal god, the sole moral ruler of the nations. No doubt the rise of this momentous concept was

[1] Vide Buchanan Gray, ' Hebrew Monotheism ', in *Proceedings of Oxford Society of Historic Theology*, 1922–3.

helped by the belief that Israel was God's peculiar people and that their tribal deity was bound to justify them as against other peoples. Therefore as Israel inevitably came into contact and conflict with mighty empires, it was inevitable that Jahwé should come to be regarded as directing the destiny of those empires. And here we have the foundations of the first philosophy of history and of a higher moral monotheism, which reaches its fullest expression in Deutero-Isaiah.

It is much that Jahwé should have shed his tribal exclusiveness ; it was momentous for future Messianic hopes that Malachi and others should confidently predict the time when all mankind would worship Jahwé : 'from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles : and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name.' [1] But it has been observed that the monotheistic idea even in the prophetic books is implicit rather than explicit ; nor is it developed up to the height of its possibilities.

The question what was the exact attitude of the orthodox Jewish monotheist, who in the post-exilic period had imbibed the advanced prophetic teaching, towards the gods of other nations is not easy to answer. It was much to be able to say 'as for the images of the heathen, they are but silver and gold, but it is the Lord that made the heavens' ; 'their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands ; they

[1] Malachi, 1. 11. Vide *infra*, p. 83, n. 1, for the question whether this refers to the present or the future.

have mouths but they speak not,' [1] &c. : and 'all the gods of the nations are idols : but the Lord made the heavens' ; [2] 'be not afraid of them ; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good.' [3] To be delivered from the spell of idolatry was a great deliverance ; but to deny the value of idols is not the same as to deny the reality of the deities that they represent.[4] The advanced monotheist may pass three different judgements on the personalities of an alien polytheism : he may tolerantly explain them merely as different manifestations, forms, and names of the sole true God : he may deny their reality altogether : he may admit their reality and damn them as evil spirits, unworthy of any worship. The first was only possible for the more tolerant and philosophic spirit of the Greek and the Roman nursed on Greek culture. Could it have been accepted by the masses and by the races of the stronger religious consciousness, it would have been better for the harmony of the world. The popular religion of the Mediterranean world only shows an inkling of it, when in the Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman period the deities of the Oriental peoples are easily fused and identified to some extent with each other or with the old Hellenic or Roman ; but such fusion

[1] Psalm 115. 4–6. [2] *Ib.* 96. 5. [3] Jer. 10. 5.

[4] Jeremiah seems not far from this in the verse 'the gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens' (10. 11) : compare in Deutero-Isaiah 41. 24, the challenge of Jahwé to the heathen gods : 'Behold, ye are of nothing and your work of nought : an abomination is he that chooseth you.'

was never enough to obliterate the many personalities or to establish a real monotheism. And this tolerant judgement was almost impossible for the Jew [1] and the Judaic Christian, as it was later impossible for Islam. Perhaps the chief obstacle was the extraordinary superstition of the old world in respect of names, stronger in Egypt and Israel than it was in Greece, but traceable in all the old communities, unintelligible to us and yet surviving in our liturgies. The theme has been sufficiently handled in many writings, and I need not enlarge on it here. The sting of the superstition lies in the deception *nomen numen habet*; in the belief that the divine name was an essential, even an esoteric, part of the divine personality, and that therefore a divinity with a different name must be a different and might be a hostile Being. Therefore the overpowering influence of the name of Jahwé would prevent the Jewish thinker, whose religious interest was mainly ethical

[1] The only text that I am aware of that may be quoted against this is in *Aristaeae Epistula*, 16, τὸν πάντων ἐπόπτην καὶ κτίστην θεὸν οὗτοι σέβονται (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι), ὃν καὶ πάντες, ἡμεῖς δὲ, βασιλεῦ, προσονομάζοντες ἑτέρως Ζῆνα καὶ Δία: Aristeas pretends to be a Greek writing to a Greek in the time of the second Ptolemy: he is probably a Jew of a later period but Hellenized and writing dramatically as a Greek: the text is then not an utterance of true Judaic thought. But Dr. Sanday in his last published lectures, discussing the text of Malachi quoted above, has shown that the verb probably is to be interpreted as in the present tense, so that the prophet declares that as a matter of fact all the nations of the world are actually worshipping Jahwé, in so far as they worship a High God. If this is his meaning, the prophet was in advance of his age.

rather than speculative, from interpreting Baal as merely another local manifestation of his own tribal god; for him as for others the name trailed with it a thousand differing associations. The judgement of early Christianity on the deities of polytheism is well known; it transformed them into evil spirits or devils, thereby preserving the consistency of monotheism at the expense of human charity and fair judgement.

But we cannot limit our study of monotheism to the Judaic sphere or to those later world-religions that were partly inspired by Judaism. We can by no means say that Jewish monotheism was the earliest in our religious history. Renan, to whom we owe the dictum 'on n'invente pas le monothéisme' regards it as the product of an imperious instinct of the Semitic race. But no clear evidence has been adduced to prove that in pre-Islamic days any Semitic race save Israel had attained to the idea of the unity of God:[1] except that the Book of Job enshrines a noble monotheism and is not recognizably Judaic or Jahwistic. Some Assyriologists have tried to discover the monotheistic concept struggling to emerge from the tangle of Mesopotamian cults; pointing to such texts as the tablet whereon various deities appear to be identified with Marduk, Nergal being called 'the Marduk of War', Nebo the 'Marduk of Property', Enlil the 'Marduk of Sovereignty', Ninib the 'Marduk of Strength',[2]

[1] The evidence has been well considered by Buchanan Gray in his paper cited above (p. 80).

[2] Jastrow, *Die Religion Babyloniens und Assyriens*, vol. 1, p. 203, n. 1.

or to the inscription on a statue in the British Museum—'O man yet to be born, believe in Nebo and trust in no other Gods but him'. It is easy to be deceived by such texts as these, wherein for political reasons the deity of a particular state or temple may be so exalted that all others appear as nothing before him; and it may have been characteristic of the ecstatic temperament of the Babylonian to be so preoccupied with the imagination of the deity to whom he was praying that for a time that one appears the sole personality of his divine world: this emotional attitude has been called by the unhappy name of 'henotheism', which only means 'one god at a time'; and the Babylonian who composed the text on Nebo just mentioned could revert to polytheism almost in the same breath, calling Nebo 'the sole God, the beloved of Bel, the Lord of Lords'.[1] Also, the powerful personality of Ishtar would alone have made monotheism impossible in this part of the world. For a god may reign alone, but a goddess never.

The most impressive monotheism in ancient times outside Israel and previous to Israel, was that which Amenhotep IV or Ikhnaton—as he piously renamed himself—established at Tel-el-Amarna near Thebes. This may be regarded as the most remarkable achievement in the history of religion, due to the will-power of a single man acting in direct opposition to the wishes and emotions of his people and to the influence of a powerful priesthood. Professor

[1] Vide *Greece and Babylon*, p. 188.

Breasted [1] and others have revealed to us the full history of this great event. About 1375 B. C. the young King Amenhotep came forward as the champion of a solar monotheism to which the new name of the sun-god 'Aton' was attached. And in the hymns Aton is proclaimed as the sole god 'beside whom there is no other', as the creator of all lands, of all mankind, and solely beneficent. The language of the hymns in respect of their fervour, the height of their religious thought and of their sense of the divine life in the world, is on the level of the loftiest monotheistic inspiration in the Hebrew books. And Ikhnaton, like Elijah, is very jealous for his Lord, abolishing the cults and erasing even the names of all other deities, but, unlike Elijah, shedding no blood. In view of his success in carrying through a stupendous religious reform, he towers above all kings in recorded history, even Asoka; and for his own lifetime he appears to have relieved his people from the dark tangle of magic that choked their religion, a people that desired no such relief. A similar attempt made by one of the Peruvian Incas not long before the Spanish Conquest to establish a monotheistic cult of the creator of all things failed from the outset.[2] It was only a royal Pharaoh of profound vision that could carry through so audacious a revolution; and Professor Breasted rightly regards him as the first recorded idealist in

[1] *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, Lecture IX.

[2] Payne, *History of the New World*, vol. 1, p. 454.

history, but an idealist born 'out of due time' and out of all sympathy with the religious bias of his people. Therefore his work throve only in his lifetime; his monotheism was obliterated immediately after his death; and in his memory he may be said to have suffered a posthumous martyrdom, being only remembered as 'the criminal of Akhetaton', his name for the modern Tel-el-Amarna.[1]

Apart from the fierce opposition of the priesthood and the polytheistic passion of the Egyptians, another drawback in the creed of Ikhnaton which would have probably imperilled its hold on the popular mind was the identification of the sole god of the universe with the visible sun. A solar monotheism would not have been able to withstand the pressure of the simplest philosophy; it was tried again in the later Roman Empire by Aurelian (*circa* A. D. 270), but without the inspiration of genius and without popular effect. When we compare the records of this temporary monotheism of Egypt with the earliest presentation that can be revealed to us of Hebrew monotheism, we are struck with differences too great to admit of any theory that Jahwé-cult owed something to Ikhnaton. The god Aton was an omnipresent universal god, a warm and genial nature-power, the creator of all life and beauty; Jahwé is at the outset the jealous tribal god of a small Semitic stock, reflecting the grim hardness of their temperament, caring not so much like Aton for the flower and the chick in the egg, as for the main-

[1] Breasted, *op. cit.*, p. 345.

tenance of righteousness and judgement. And herein has lain the strength of his appeal to the later ages, that he has no discoverable nature-origin and none of the weaknesses of a nature-god, but is an ethical personality to the core and from the beginning. Nor is there any proof that Israel in Egypt ever came within reach of the gleam of monotheism that shone from Ikhnaton.

Another centre in which we have strong reason for believing that a true monotheism arose was Iran, in the days of Zarathustra, a prophet whose authenticity has been proved beyond doubt, and whose date modern scholars are inclined to place at least as far back as the ninth century. We in England owe much to the recent work of the late Professor Moulton on 'Early Zoroastrianism', who in a series of Hibbert Lectures has traced the development whereby Ahura Mazdāh, originally the special god of an Aryan-Iranian tribe, became exalted into sole world-deity by the genius of the prophet. The causes that lay behind this development may never be revealed with certainty; we may pay some regard to the writer's suggestion that Zarathustra's inspiration was derived from a devotion to truth, a great tradition of his race, and from his own brooding conviction that all truth was a unity. He has also succeeded in commending the view that Ahura Mazdāh, 'the Wise Lord', emerged as a spiritual and ethical god, in the thought of Zarathustra, not as a nature-deity attached to any element, and not yet entangled in the dualism to

which he was bound over by the later Magian speculation. From this point of view, therefore, this early Iranian monotheism has more affinity with the Hebrew, to which it is in all probability prior, than with the still earlier Egyptian.

There is yet another ancient religion, the earliest discoverable faith of China, in which traces of monotheism have been discerned by modern scholars.[1] There appear to have been two terms in the ancient literature whereby the deity was designated, Tien and Shang-Ti; and of these the first, which is the earlier, though it is subsequently used to express the material sky, originally denoted 'the Supreme Ruler', 'One and Great', and regarded as an anthropomorphic personality, if we may trust the evidence of the pictograms. The personality does not appear to have grown out of any nature-cult, and Dr. Söderblöm would explain it as a development of the primitive concept of the Father or the Fathers who created everything.[2] Assuming that this may have been his origin we are still in doubt whether this is true monotheism, whether at any period Ti or Tien dominated the religious world of China as the sole god; for we have early evidence there of nature-worship and ancestor-cult.

These are all the examples of monotheism that history presents to us, even in glimpses, in the pre-

[1] Giles, *Religion of Ancient China*, pp. 14–16; Hastings, *E. R. E.* vol. 3, p. 550. De Groot in Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Lehrbuch*[5], 1, p. 61.

[2] *Arch. Relig. Wiss.* 1914, pp. 9–10.

Christian era. Occasionally a Greek thinker or a writer of the Graeco-Roman period may give utterance to the idea of the unity of God; but usually without any polemic against polytheism and never with any controlling or restraining influence on the popular polytheistic belief. The unity of the Roman Empire suggested and assisted a certain trend towards unification in religion, attempted by emperors such as Hadrian and Aurelian. These attempts were little more than a mere blending of various divinities. And when Christianity became dominant, its High God is no blend but the eternal sole God of Jewish monotheism. And this must be regarded also as the source of Islamism. Finally we may observe certain reforms that tended to monotheism in later Hinduism, such as the Sikh religion of which the founder was Guru Nanak in the fifteenth century.

This sketch of the facts bearing on the great religious phenomenon that is occupying us, brief as it is, does not—I venture to think—omit any that is of value or significance. They may seem to afford us too slight a foundation for strong and valuable inductions. Yet some tentative conclusions may be drawn from them. The triumph of the monotheistic idea is less probable when the High God is a nature-god—such as was Aton of Ikhnaton—than when he was presented from the outset as an ethical and spiritual Person, as were—so far as we can discern—Jahwé, Ahura Mazdāh, and later Allah. Again, the triumph of monotheism demands the exercise of a strong restraint upon the anthropo-

morphic fancy : hence the sole High Power is always presented as a male, never a female, personality, and the further he is removed from human conditions, the greater the degree of awfulness, majesty, and might that invest him.

Lastly, as no people have been recorded or discovered with an inborn craving or race-bias making for monotheism, but on the contrary the lower and prevalent popular instinct is always polytheistic, we must attribute a profound influence to the inspiration of prophets and great thinkers to account for the victory, or even for the emergence, of monotheism at certain times among certain peoples. We cannot indeed discern a prophet of monotheism in prehistoric China. But when we think of Ikhnaton, Zarathustra, the Jewish prophets, Mahomet, we must distrust the aphorism of Renan quoted above. And at this day the only monotheisms, pure, unmixed, and alive, are Judaism and Islamism ; as regards India, a recent writer on Indian theism, while doing justice to the various monotheistic movements set on foot by gifted reformers, admits that they have not succeeded in purging the temple-courts of polytheism and idolatry.[1]

It is interesting to consider the difficulties against which monotheism has to contend and which often have proved fatal to it. The supreme and sole God may be so exalted by the prophet and the inspired propagandist that he becomes too remote from the popular imagination. Or the philosopher,

[1] MacNicol, *Indian Theism*, p. 263.

to whom the idea of unity specially appeals, may translate the concept of God so thoroughly into the terms of the Absolute that he presents him at last as Ineffable and Unknowable. And this is to deal the death-blow to practical monotheism, for the absolutely unknowable can be of no human service. Philosophy may rarely have been able to chill a strongly settled monotheistic faith in the minds of the people; nevertheless the feeling of the remoteness of the High God has generally engendered a craving for a mediator to serve as a link between the worshipper and the supreme. Such a mediator was the Guru in the religion of the Sikhs, for only through the Guru could the worshipper know and approach his god. Such a mediator did Mithras become in what was left of the old Zarathustrian monotheism: and the idea of the mediator has become the central feature of our religion. The tendency is then to exalt the mediator into the status of divinity, and the problem at once arises how this may be reconciled with the dogma of monotheism. This has been the main preoccupation of our Christology. The minds and consciences of the earliest Christians seem to have been but little troubled at first: they did not feel that their adoration of Christ as the Son of God, the Redeemer and the coming Judge of the world, in any way infringed their loyalty to their traditional Judaic faith in monotheism; for the older Judaic Messianic teaching could conceive of the Messiah as the Son of God in a spiritual sense. When we read St. Paul's

chapter in the epistle to the Corinthians (1. 15), we realize how simple, unmetaphysical, and how far from Catholic orthodoxy is the theology there expressed: Christ is the Redeemer, the Vice-Gerent, the Son of God, but for St. Paul the High God of his fathers remains supreme and sole in the end. We know, then, how in the succeeding centuries the problem of reconciling the real humanity of Christ, essential to the satisfaction of the popular craving, with his divinity, and again with his equality or identity with God, essential to the maintenance of monotheism, convulsed and agonized the world of Arians, Doketists, and Catholics, until the theologic metaphysic of our Catholic creeds was formulated to settle the conflicting claims of heart and thought. Whether the philosophy and logic involved and expressed in them is coherent and effective for the clear and profound thinker is not our question at this point.

But the student of the history of monotheism must raise and answer the question whether the popular religion of Christendom either in the earlier or later ages can be properly so described, and he will not be assisted or overmuch influenced by orthodox treatises and orthodox confessions, but by his knowledge of the popular psychology and his power of imagining the inward working of the popular religious mind. He may there discover two distinct religious perceptions or forms: the form of the divine man, near and most dear, attractive and appealing; and the form of the supreme God, remote

and terrifying such as He appears in the drama *Everyman*, invested with the tradition and characteristics of the Hebrew Jahwé ; and the Athanasian formulae have been of no avail to fuse these two distinct forms into one.[1]

In fact the idea of the Son of God was dear and appealing to the Greek converts because it was so natural to polytheism. And it was a true appreciation of its possible danger to monotheism, gathered from his observation of the Christianity of his period, that moved Mahomet to protest violently against it in many a passage of the *Qu'ran* ; as he protests with equal vehemence against the belief that any patron or mediator could aid man in his relations with the Most High. ' The soul besides God has no patron or intercessor.' [2] Thus he built the impregnable fabric of the most rigid monotheism that has ever prevailed.

Another influence, less observed and more subtle, that tends to impair the purity of the monotheistic idea is due to a certain weakness in the popular mentality, of which the effect is found in more than one high religion. It appears difficult for the popular religious mind at the average level of development to keep its sense of the ' strong identity ' of the self of God. The various manifestations of God, his acts, his qualities, his power, his providence,

[1] As Professor Moulton observes (*Treasure of the Magi*, p. 100), ' Monotheistic theology is preserved, but it can hardly be said that monotheistic religion remains '.

[2] Palmer, *Qu'ran*, 2. 69, p. 123.

his spirit, even his name, tend to become personified ; and, as personality implies individuality and distinctness, tend to become detached or half-detached as separate individuals. These personifications most easily emerge and are most easily admitted in polytheisms: in the Hellenic we note Πρόνοια, the Providence of God, 'Dike' and 'Aidos', Justice and Pity, and many other such abstractions gaining a certain recognition either in poetry or in real cult as divinities, though normally regarded as activities or qualities of the High God ; as in Egypt we hear of Truth the daughter of Thoth. We find them also with more disturbing effect in monotheisms. Thus, the Amesha Spentas,[1] 'the Immortal Holy Ones', 'Good Thought, Right, Piety, Dominion, Salvation, Immortality', are in the earlier Gathas imagined as attributes, functions, or powers of Ahura Mazdāh, but they become invoked and worshipped as gods or goddesses in the later Avesta and suggest to Plutarch the 'Six Gods' created by Oromazdes.[2]

The same tendency has had momentous effect on Christian theology. The Logos, or Word of God, having acquired a degree of personality in Philo, becomes a substantive deity in Gnosticism, and helped by Johannine influence becomes at last one with Christ in Catholic creed. But the personification of such an abstract idea as the Logos need in itself have caused no further perplexity for monotheistic faith ; for as the Logos could be identified with

[1] Moulton, *Treasure of the Magi*, pp. 21–4, 58.

[2] *De Isid. et Osir.* 47.

Christ, and as Christology inevitably came to insist on his divine personality, the problem of plurality within the unity of Godhead was already pressing. The problem might have been solved and the dogma of monotheism satisfied by the concept of a dual divinity forming a complex whole divine self; for a dualistic unity is at least as convincing as a Trinitarian, and examples of both in other religions are not wanting. But the Jewish conception of the Holy Spirit, in our archaic language the Holy Ghost—originally the Breath of God, whereby as by a divine emanation He could work at a distance from Sinai and especially upon the spirit of man—had already become semi-personal before our era; and we may say that certain passages of our gospels and a few in the apostolic writings reveal the embryology of the third Person of our Trinity. Notably in the 8th chapter of Romans (*v.* 26), the spirit is at least semi-personal and to that extent a semi-distinct agent, and as it plays the part of an intercessor pleading with God on our behalf it is implicitly regarded as of inferior or subordinate status, though the writer may not have realized the full significance of his words; but his thought or half-thought that the spirit has a personality distinct from God is revealed by the strange words that follow in *v.* 27: 'He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the spirit.' We may also believe that the emergence of the spirit as a distinct personality was quickened by the diffusion and acceptance of the story of the divine birth; for the imagination of the

Jewish, if not of the Gentile, convert would shrink from imputing even a mystical act of begetting to the Highest God. But neither St. Paul nor the Evangelists ever show themselves aware of the difficulties that might arise for monotheism from such personifications. Even the doubtful words imputed to Christ at the close of the first gospel do not clearly reveal the fully formed Trinitarian formula of Catholicism. For some reasons that cannot here be considered the mind of developing Christianity, brooding on the birth-narrative and such passages as those referred to above, came to insist more sharply on the separate personality of the Holy Spirit than St. Paul or the earliest Christians had done; until at last the Trinitarian concept is crystallized as in the Athanasian Creed. It is difficult to regard this crystallization as inevitable, or the Trinitarian solution as the only resource whereby the divinity of a human Christ could be reconciled with monotheism. At least we cannot say that the idea of a triune God was for this reason inevitable, namely, that through the traditions of their adjacent religions it was naturally congenial to the Semitic or Anatolian or Hellenic converts; for those who have found the idea conspicuous and powerful in the pre-Christian religions of these contiguous areas have misinterpreted the evidence.[1]

[1] Vide *Greece and Babylon*, pp. 185–7. In Carthaginian and Hellenic cults it is not hard to find complexes of three divinities; such groups may represent the minimum human family, father, mother, and son, and belong naturally to polytheism.

To understand and appreciate the development of early Catholicism it is of some importance to observe the various so-called heresies, especially the Gnostic, with which the early Church had to contend. The mental process which we have been considering, which has given us our own creed, the process whereby the acts or functions or emanations of the sole God become personified as potentially separate entities, is found exuberant, uncontrolled, and even riotous in the Gnostic writings. We have such personifications as Ἔννοια, the Thought of God, incarnate in Helena the female companion of Simon Magus; Σοφία or Wisdom in the Ophite system, born of the excess of light that leaked over when Christ was begotten by the Highest God on the Holy Ghost, here imagined as feminine; and Sophia plays a creative part in the Valentinian cosmogony, for the lower worlds arose from her wilful ambition to produce life by herself, just as the High God unaided had brought her forth. We are reminded at once of a similar myth of Zeus and Hera. In much reading of the Gnostics we weary of the facile multiplication of abstractions personified as divine agents, and we dislike the sexual licence of imagination that explains their births and combinations. Greek polytheism was wholesome and sober compared to much of this. It has been rightly said that 'the daring speculation of the Gnostics as to the nature of the Godhead and the origin of the world forced upon the Catholic Church the necessity of formulating her views'.[1] And those who are familiar with the

[1] Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, vol. 2, p. 22.

Gnostic and Hermetic literatures will appreciate the comparative intelligibility, coherence, and restraint in the religious metaphysic of the Athanasian Creed.

But religious metaphysic scarcely penetrates and never controls the popular religious mind. In spite of our hymnology and some beautiful poetry that exalt the third Person of our Trinity, there is little proof that his personality is a living power for the mass of believers. He appeared occasionally as a person in the medieval miracle-play, and a few churches in Christendom might be named after him. But there is strong reason for believing that the majority of earnest Christians have always addressed their prayers primarily to God and to Christ, as two distinct personages without any thought of the triune dogma, and that the Holy Spirit is too shadowy an entity for the popular mind to grasp.

Still more marked inroads upon the monotheism from which Christianity arose have been made by the diffusion of the cults of the Virgin and the saints. The Holy Mother of God, when she first reached this lofty grade of ἡ θεοτόκος, was ecstatically acclaimed by the people of Ephesos; and these are the same people who some six centuries before 'all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians'. And their mood on the two occasions was the same, the mood of passionate devotion to a Virgin Mother-Goddess. For though orthodox Catholicism, as expressed in its creeds, does not award her the status of high divinity, it would be impossible to deny, unless we

strip the name 'goddess' of all meaning, that in a large area of Christendom she has the full status and character of a goddess. She is not admitted to be omnipotent, but neither was Ishtar omnipotent and yet undoubtedly a great goddess.

As for the widespread cult of saints, it is reconcilable with monotheism perhaps, if the consciousness of the worshipper is vividly aware of the subordinate rank of the saint. It is a matter for local experience to decide whether in some backward villages of Christendom the local saint does not occupy the position of a god, so far as the average needs of the peasant and his feeling of dependence on the unseen world are concerned. In any case there is much in Moulton's contention that 'when prayer is made to any being but God, he is *ipso facto* thrust out of the sphere which he claims as his own. . . . Prayer is the final test of any real monotheism, and the name is really misleading as soon as prayer is offered to any spirit less than God himself.'[1]

We discern now that Mediterranean polytheism was never permanently overthrown and that many of its fibres survive in the soil of our orthodox Christianity. The fervent votary of the Virgin is touched unconsciously—it may be—by race-memories of Isis, Artemis, Cybele, or the Cretan goddess. We may applaud and approve this. We may exult in our humanitarian religion which has appropriated all that was best from monotheism and polytheism,

[1] *Treasure of the Magi*, pp. 100–1.

from Palestine, Greece, Phrygia, and Egypt. But in this attitude we must part company with the Old Testament and abandon any claim to call our religion a pure monotheism, a term which strictly applies only to Unitarian Christianity. The current popular religion of Europe should be rather described as a high spiritual polytheism tempered and restrained by the Athanasian Creed. The idea of Godhead must become more and more pluralized if the worship of the goddess and the adoration of saints and images gain ground more and more. But, for our conjectures as to the future of religion, it is well to bear in mind that while Catholic Christianity may be more appealing and appear to ordinary humanity more gracious than any severe monotheism, the idea of the High God, one and sole, works strongly upon the philosopher and the lonely thinker and upon certain of the more exalted religious temperaments. And the traditional power of the Old Testament is still alive.

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# IV

## ELEMENTAL AND NATURAL FUNCTIONS AND ATTRIBUTES

When we survey for the purpose of scientific exposition the manifold activities, functions, and attributes assigned or imputed to the deity in the various world-religions, the first question that troubles us is whether we can find a logical classification that will include them all. Probably the best working principle is that which distinguishes those that belong to the world of nature and those that regard the life of man both public and private. It is true that the two spheres overlap at many points; agriculture for instance belongs partly to the world of nature partly to human activity; and some of the higher and essential attributes of divinity equally concern both, such as beneficence and omnipotence. But students of comparative religion have been in the habit of laying stress on the distinction between elemental and nature-divinities on the one hand and divine personalities of ethical and spiritual characteristics on the other as a far-reaching and essential difference in our concept of divinity. It was even made by Aristophanes a salient distinction between the religions of the Hellenes and 'the barbarians' that the former worshipped personal and individualized gods, such as Zeus, Hermes, and Apollo, the latter the sun and

the moon and the host of heaven. Among modern scholars the view has been prevalent that the striking objects and forces of nature furnished the earliest impulse towards the belief in gods, and much labour has been expended on the endeavour to trace the higher personalities of the most advanced religions back to some elemental perception of sun, moon, dawn, or wind. Much of this labour has been wasted, and the assumption which dictated it is probably false. Certainly the worship of the striking objects and forces of the natural world is of great antiquity and has been and is widely prevalent; but modern anthropology does not support the view that it was the sole or the earliest source of theistic belief; there is the equally primitive belief in the superhuman being of old time, the founder and teacher of the culture and rites of the tribe, who then departed to the skies, and from whom might emerge the concept of a high personal god of no direct association with nature or the elements.

Nevertheless, as so much of religion has been preoccupied with the realm of nature, it may well be that our more advanced and spiritual concepts of divinity have derived much or at least something from this source.

Nature and the elements of nature may be felt and perceived as divine either in an animistic or theistic sense; the whole fabric of the world or striking parts of it may be believed to be permeated with an immanent divine spirit or spirits; and this view in the terms of popular religion is called

animism, and is supposed to be more natural to primitive consciousness; or it may be regarded as directed, either as a whole or in the various parts of it, by a High God or subordinate gods, personalities of superhuman power and intelligence acting from without; and this may be called 'theism', belief in a world controlled by a personal θεός or θεοί, and this is the point of view that is mainly prominent and authoritative in the great historical religions of the world. We may often find both beliefs and modes of imagination combined in the same religion; and the animistic view appeals, not merely to the savage, but to the civilized mind, and agrees well with our higher poetry, the more ideal phases of science, and with a pantheistic philosophy. To the ordinary Hellene Aphrodite was a concrete individual goddess, directing certain phenomena of vegetation and life; but when she describes her functions in a great passage in a lost play of Aeschylus, the *Danaides*, and speaks of the holy marriage of earth and heaven in the spring-tide embrace—

Pure Heaven yearneth to put seed into the Earth,
And Earth is possessed with longing for Heaven's embrace:
Rain falling from the fair founts of Heaven
Maketh Earth pregnant: and she bears for the blessing of men
Pasture for the flocks, and Demeter's staff of life;
And the bloom of the tree is ripened by the dewy marriage:
Of all this (life) I Aphrodite am the cause—

she is proclaiming herself mystically as an immanent cosmic power of life and love, such as the sceptical Lucretius could admit and welcome as 'Alma Venus'.

But on the whole it is true to say that it has been the personal concrete god or goddess that has been the stronger force in popular religion and in our history; because such beings being concrete could be made more definite, could be clothed with varied attributes and humanized. Now the difficulty in nature-worship is the difficulty of developing purely elemental deities into moral personalities. It might be supposed unlikely that a storm-god should grow into a benevolent and compassionate being, a lover of righteousness. And evidently the early Greeks felt this difficulty; for we do not find advanced ethical traits in their shaping of the purely elementary deities, such as Helios, Selene, the wind-gods. But other nations of antiquity seem to have felt it less. The Assyrian Adad, the god of storms, could become a God of mercy. Many of the deities in the Vedic pantheon can be recognized as elemental powers of nature; but concepts of high ethical and spiritual import attach to them, especially to Varuna. And this is eminently the case with the sun-god in the Mesopotamian and Egyptian systems. The hymns to Shamash, the sun-god of Nippur, have grandeur and religious value.[1] He becomes the god of righteousness, the law-giver, who gives the great code to Hammurabi. 'The wicked Judge thou (Shamash) makest to behold bondage: he who receives not a bribe, who has regard to the weak, shall be well-pleasing to Shamash.' We thus understand why the Babylonian personifications of Justice and Law,

[1] C. D. Gray, *The Samas Religious Texts* (Brit. Mus.), Hymn 1.

Kettu and Mésaru, should be regarded as the children of Shamash. The hymns to Re-Aton, embodying the solar monotheism of Ikhnaton make up one of the masterpieces of religious poetry. Like Saturn in Keats's *Hyperion*, the sun-god of Tell-el-Amarna rejoices in

> All godlike exercise . . .
> Of peaceful sway above man's harvesting,
> And all those acts which Deity supreme
> Doth ease its heart of love in.

Composed either by or for the great reforming king they exalt most fervently the sun-god as the source of all life and of all joy.[1] 'The birds flutter in their marshes, their wings uplifted in adoration to thee. All the sheep dance upon their feet, all winged things fly. They live when thou has shone upon them. Creator of the germ in woman, maker of seed in man, giving life to the son in the body of his mother.' . . . 'When the fledgling in the egg chirps in the shell, Thou givest him breath to preserve him alive: . . . How manifold are thy works! They are hidden from before us. O sole God whose powers no other possesseth: thou didst create the earth according to thy heart.' 'Thou art in my heart, there is none other that knoweth thee save thy son Ikhnaton.' 'All flowers live and what grows in the soil is made to grow because thou dawnest. They are drunken before thee. All cattle skip upon their feet: the birds in the marsh fly with joy, their wings that were folded are spread,

[1] Breasted's translation, *op. cit.* p. 325.

uplifted in adoration to the living Aton.' Ikhnaton was like Spinoza *ein Gottbetrunkener Mensch*; and the flowers and beasts of the field are imagined to share in his mystic intoxication. There is a stronger *joie de vivre* in this than in any other monotheistic hymn. It is not clear whether Aton is conceived as the personal creator, or as the well-head of all life, or as the immanent pervasive vital force; various phrases accord with each of these views. But the spirit of love broods strongly over the spirit of the hymn; and perfect love seems to have cast out fear, while direct ethical characterization is wanting. This, however, is discerned clearly enough in the old Egyptian sun-god Amon before the period of Ikhnaton, and still more in the Amon of Thebes when the old name and the old Theban cult were revived after the overthrow of the monotheism. In the later hymns he is hailed as 'the Lord of Truth'—and Truth in Egypt meant Righteousness and Judgement—as one 'kindly of heart who saves the timid from the haughty. . . . Lord of sweetness, great in love, at whose coming the people live.' 'Thou, O Amon art the lord of the silent, who cometh at the cry of the poor.' [1]

Here, then, is a nature-god whose name appears to identify him with a physical phenomenon or element, but who nevertheless can become a High Power of the spiritual life.

One can discern a certain logic in the mental process which associated the sun-god with the ideas

[1] Breasted, *op. cit.* pp. 347 and 351.

of right order and benevolence as well as with physical productivity. Another idea of ethical and spiritual value or promise which ancient thought tended to attach to him was that of purity. The sun's light is essentially pure and purifying; and sins and crimes have been regarded as offences against the sun's divinity, stains on the sun's face, likely to arouse the wrath of the god. Only, as the sunlight did not easily lend itself to magical use in the ritual of purification, his earthly counterpart, fire or the fire-god, usually appropriated this function and the fire-god in Vedic and Babylonian ritual became pre-eminently the deities of purity and purification.

The ethical character of the sun-god was further strengthened by his close association with the ceremony of oath-taking. As the sun's eye sees all that happens in heaven and earth, it was natural to invoke the sun-god in the formula of the oath in testimony of innocence. Therefore he could easily come to be conceived as the Lord of Truth, who favoured the true man and punished the false. And the earliest belief that we can prove for the Hellenes in a moral judgement after death was the belief that the perjured suffer in the next world; for the perjured had offended against the sun and the earth, the two divinities most commonly invoked in the Greek oath.

There is yet another divine attribute, of deep concern for higher religion that nature-worship has at times prompted or assisted the human imagination

to recognize and develop, the attribute of loving-kindness or tenderness. The worship of the earth in Greece, and only in Greece, acquired some degree of spiritual value in this respect; for the Hellenic genius refined the concept of her as the mother of human life and especially as κουροτρόφος, the kindly fosterer of children; and there emerged from her as a radiant emanation the kindly Demeter, whose type was so masterfully dealt with by the Greek artist that the sunny radiance of her face became tinged with the shadow of tender sorrow for the loss of her daughter; and as the myth evolved a higher religion of which the fundamental concept was the human hope of a blessed immortality, so the art-creation contributed the idea of a certain madonna-like tenderness as a trait of the divine personality, and is thus an event in the history of religious evolution. Here, then, is a nature-cult, the cult of the earth-goddess as corn-mother, that has added something to our spiritual inheritance. The earth-cults of other nations had no such ideal value, and were often grim, bloody, and uncouth. But the Babylonian and Anatolian legends and worship of Tammuz and Adonis reveal the same trait of alluring tenderness blent with sorrow. Tammuz is called 'the Lord of the tender voice and the shining eyes', and we detect in the poetic pathos of some of his hymns the modern note of sentimentality;[1] and both these deities impersonate the divine spirit of the spring and the bloom of the early year that

[1] *Greece and Babylon*, pp. 196–7.

passes away and is lamented, and both are lovers or fosterlings of a great goddess.

Man's varying relations to nature have divided his history into marked economic periods, each with its own influence on the imagined character of the divine beings. Of the hunting period no reflection remains in our modern religious tradition, except perhaps the sense that wakens in many of us of a divine presence that haunts the deepest recesses of the forest. But the pastoral period, in which some bright and humanized forms of deity arose, has left a more marked imprint both on our religious imagination and on our poetry and art. There is nothing strange in this, for it has never really passed away, in spite of our modern agricultural economy and industrialism. And we look back often yearningly to the freedom, freshness, and simplicity of the nomadic pastoral life, which was commemorated for the Israelites by the feast of Tabernacles, suggesting to them that such a life was dearer than any other to Jahwé himself. More important is it that the primitive pastoral economy has maintained freshly through the ages the winning character and attributes of the High God as the Good Shepherd. Long before the rise of Hebrew psalmody, the sage Ipuwer in the earlier part of the second millennium B. C. addressed the ideal king, the sun-god Ré, as 'the shepherd of all men' who gathers them together, 'their hearts being fevered'; and the idea reappears in a later hymn to the sun-god.[1] We find a parallel

[1] Breasted, *op. cit.* p. 211.

to this in the Sumerian liturgies where Tammuz is frequently invoked as 'the Shepherd'.[1]

Independently of Egyptian or Babylonian influences, the imagination of the best of the Hebrew psalmists was fascinated by the same pastoral-religious idea, and this has inspired some haunting and familiar phrases—'The Lord is my shepherd, therefore I shall lack nothing.' These psalms may be the fountain-head of the parables in the New Testament that embody the spiritual-pastoral concept; later Christian art dealt lovingly with it, and our modern hierarchic institutions and liturgical phrases reflect it.

We may say, then, that the pastoral period and the nature-religion attaching to it have left their impress on the human imagination, prompting it to develop the attributes of loving-kindness and tenderness as essential to the character of the deity.

But more constructive in shaping and fixing the forms and thoughts of higher religion has been the influence of the settled agricultural society, which was the necessary basis for a more complex civilization and for the emergence of a more complex and stronger human individuality. Nowhere has this influence been more clearly and forcibly set forth than in Payne's *History of the New World* in regard to Mexican and Peruvian religion.[2] We may trace it round the world, but it must suffice here to give the most salient examples of it from the Zarathustrian

[1] *Greece and Babylon*, p. 105.

[2] Vol. 1, *Agriculture and Religion*, pp. 389–489.

gospel and from Hellenic religion. As Moulton has clearly shown, Zarathustra in his original message to his people closely associated his higher religious revelation and higher morality with the settled agricultural life; for at the outset of his career he was an enemy of the warlike and lawless nomads that harried the borders of his people and an enemy of their gods. One of the quaintest and one of the most moving of the Gathas is the Yasna or lyrical drama [1] in which the soul of the ox pleads before Ahura for a protector against outrage and rapine, and Ahura appoints Zarathustra and arms him with power to 'drive off violence together with the followers of the Lie'; whom we may call the Kurds or the Turanians. And in other Gathas the truth is emphasized that 'he that is no husbandman has no part in the good message'.[2] 'For the cattle Mazdāh Ahura made the plants to grow at the birth of the First Life, through Right;' [3] and Ahura is invoked as he who 'didst create the Ox and Waters and Plants, Welfare and Immortality'.[4] In the later Vendidad we have an interesting colloquy between the prophet and Ahura: he asks the High God: 'What is the food that fills the religion of Mazda?' God answers him: 'it is sowing corn again and again, O Spitama Zarathustra. He who sows corn, sows Righteousness: he makes the religion of Mazda walk: he suckles the religion of Mazda.' 'When barley was created, the Daevas (the demons) started

[1] Moulton, *Early Zoroastrianism*, p. 346. [2] *Op. cit.* p. 353.
[3] *Op. cit.* p. 379, Yasna 48. [4] p. 385, Yasna 51.

up (?): when it grew, then fainted the Daevas' hearts.'[1] In regard to Greek religion, which reflects more vividly than any other that has been recorded the political and social economy of the people, the close association of the agrarian life with higher religion is strikingly illustrated by the history of the Eleusinian mysteries, which, in origin a purely agrarian ritual according to probability, become a source of real religious influence in Hellenic life. And the immemorial connexion between agriculture and a higher morality is exemplified by the record preserved concerning those officials at Athens who performed the yearly ritual of 'the sacred ploughing' and were called Bouzugai or Ox-yokers, and who conducted at the same time a commination-service cursing those who refused to share with others water and fire and those who refused to direct wanderers on their way.[2] We have also clear testimony from classical writers of their belief that Demeter the corn-goddess guarded and inspired the life of civilization. Callimachus speaks of her as 'the deity who gave pleasing ordinances to cities'; and Calvus describes her as 'she who taught men holy laws and joined loving bodies in wedlock and founded great cities'.[3]

We can well appreciate the profound impress of the agricultural life on religion when we imagine what the change from the wild wood and the shifting

[1] Darmesteter, *Sacred Books of the East*, iv. 1, pp. 30–1.

[2] *Paroemiographi Graeci* (Gaisford), p. 25; cf. *Cults of the Greek States*, 3, p. 78.

[3] *Op. cit.* p. 75.

nomadic life to the settled homestead meant for early man. It gave him the ordered happiness of the family and family-rites; it gave him the opportunity and resources for the erection of permanent shrines and the development of the ancestral cult of the dead; it humanized his concept of divinity, inducing him to believe more devoutly in his Gods' beneficence and law-abiding supervision of mankind; it turned his thoughts away from war and converted some at least of his war-gods into milder deities of the harvest;[1] and it deepened his sense of dependence on the unseen powers that control the operations of nature.

It might be supposed that a pure nature-religion worked out to its logical consequences would lead to a system of dualism of good and evil gods; for the maleficent and destructive forces in nature seem as obvious as the beneficent. But the history of such cults does not bear this out. The only developed dualism in the higher religions of the world is in the later Mazdeism of Persia, wherein the whole sphere of plants and animals was divided and apportioned between a good and an evil god; and Ahura and Ahriman, the two deities concerned, are not in the strict sense nature-divinities. But the question concerning the evil in the world and in the life of man must be reserved for a later discussion.

Another question of interest may arise in regard

[1] This appears true of the Mexican war-god (Payne, *op. cit.* 1, p. 486).

to nature-cults, whether, namely, they assisted or retarded the emergence of the belief in a creator-god, by whose fiat or act of will the whole cosmos arose. Looking at the facts of our record, we discern that only in a very few of the more advanced religions has the idea of cosmic creativeness been attached as a primary function or as an essential attribute to the High God. It is scarcely discernible in Hellenic, and only confusedly and inconsistently in Vedic polytheisms;[1] in Greek and Indian mythology the cosmos was not created by any High God, but the gods themselves were evolved in the process of the ages; Zeus in a spiritual sense was the father of gods and men, but in no sense their creator. Babylonian mythology contains indeed a creation-myth, relating how Marduk fashioned the world from the blood of Tiamit; but the story is not in the forefront of Babylonian mythology, and it is well to note in passing that Marduk is not proved to be a nature-god at all. The deities who have played the august role of creators in the world's theology have been the High Powers of the three monotheisms, Jahwé, Allah, and Ahura; and these are not nature-gods but moral and spiritual personalities; and the same may be said of the creator-gods of whom traces have been found in the old Chinese and in Mexican religions. Only in Egypt we are confronted with a marked exception; Ré, the sun-god, in documents of the 9th and the 10th dynasties is said 'to have made heaven and earth

[1] Vide Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology* (*ad init.*).

at men's desire; and again, 'his men are his own images proceeding from his flesh'.[1]

In spite of this exception we may draw the induction that this leading dogma of our theology, which is regarded as essential to the true concept of divinity, has not come to us as a tradition from nature-religion, and was not one that was easy to evolve or maintain at that level of thought when the various elements and forces of the natural world were conceived as personal deities. Nature-worship is generally polytheistic, and the cosmic theory natural to it is pluralistic, the world of nature presenting a complex of manifold phenomena; and if the deities who presided over the different departments were creative at all, their creative activity would be limited to their several spheres; nor would the theory naturally arise of a single cosmic creation as the aboriginal act of a single divine power. If and when at last among a people of high intelligence such as the Ionians the great idea of the unity of the cosmos arose, the belief in the reality of these personal deities of the polytheism would tend to fade before the light of a new-born physical science.

The help that men derived from pure nature-worship may well have been chiefly the sense of the nearness to themselves of a beneficent deity who worked and moved in the sources and elements of their own terrestrial life. His deep attachment to his own homestead, his own valley, woodland, and

[1] Vide A. M. Blackman, *Nature*, 1923, 'Sun-Cult in Ancient Egypt'.

river, was blent in the Hellene with his cults of the nymphs and the river-gods. We have proof of the passionate religious emotion that the life-giving Nile awakened in the heart of the Egyptian. But so long as the deities were immersed in the natural object or phenomenon, the river, the fire, the storm, the cloud, or the wind, it was difficult for the religious imagination to clothe them with the ethical and spiritual attributes essential to higher religion. It is true that this might here and there be achieved for the sun-god who impersonated the most glorious of all things in the material world. But the God of the highest spiritual monotheism of the world, Jahwé, was one who even in the days of the earliest belief in him 'was not in the wind' and 'was not in the earthquake'.

Yet we have lost something by this aloofness of our Hebraic and Christian God from the immediate world of nature around us; we have lost the old Pagan sense of the divinity of those things on which our physical life depends and some of the *joie de vivre* that goes with that sense. It may be open to us to recapture a portion of it according as we have the power to deepen or to subtilize our religious imagination.

But the material nourishment of that old-world religion is passing away. Our last economic phase in which we are living is industrialism. Though not yet two centuries old, it has obliterated most of the sanctities and amenities of the older life which gave sustenance to the religious sense. In overlaying

the beauty and healthful purity of our world of nature with ugliness, noise, and dirt, it has destroyed two deep springs of religious feeling. In the great centres of industrialism the emotions evoked by the kind of life led there seem for the most part anti-religious and the aesthetic nature-sense is atrophied. Therefore if religion is to recover its hold upon them, it can only be an ethical and spiritual religion borrowing nothing from nature-worship, unless indeed by some effort we can regain for nature what industrialism has destroyed.

## V

## THE TRIBAL AND NATIONAL CHARACTER AND FUNCTIONS OF THE DEITY

Omnipotence and omnipresence are characteristics of divinity that can only be grasped and imagined by the most advanced societies. The narrower social units of primitive times evolved narrower religious concepts. One such simple unit through which most families of mankind have passed is the tribe; and the special traits of tribal society are reflected in tribal religion, of which the fullest picture is presented us by the early Hellenic and Judaic records. It is true that a purely tribal religion is only found in a few savage societies of modern times; and we are not concerned at present with their stage of culture. When we survey the societies of the past that belong to the higher history of our subject, we find them already advanced beyond the stage at which the isolated tribe formed the sole unit of corporate life. This is eminently true of the Hellenes, who preserved at the period of their highest culture the clear tribal imprint on many of their social institutions, but who at the dawn of their history were already gathering into cities, and the cities were usually formed by the coalescence of many tribes and even aliens; it is true also of the Hebrews, for, though the tribal organization is most

marked in their society, they are already an intertribal union and in some degree a nation at the dawn of their history, with some measure of central government even under their judges, and with full measure under their kings. Ancient Arabia before Islam presents the same picture of many kindred tribes with common intertribal cults, and Mecca was a holy centre long before Mahomet. In the great kingdoms of the ancient world which contribute so much material to our theme, Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, the Hittite realm and Persia, religion has become national and imperial, the deities mighty territorial potentates with far-reaching influence. Even in ancient India, which was not united till the reign of Asoka, we find the worship of the same deities spread over wide areas and throughout large aggregates of men. And among these great communities the old tribal separatism has been swallowed up and lost, only faint traces of it surviving perhaps in the legend or ritual-law of some local temple; the same may be said of ancient China, Mexico, and Peru.

Nevertheless all these peoples, except for one short interval in the reign of the gifted but premature Ikhnaton of Egypt, and except for a certain higher outlook suggested or foreshadowed by some of the Hebrew prophets, are alike in this, that their deities are tribal-national, local or territorial, that is to say, particularist deities who do not claim or receive the worship of alien communities. This, then, gives us the vital and the momentous distinction between

particularist and universal religion, which to students of the higher aspects of our subject is primary; and the full account of the effects of this distinction would be almost conterminous with the history of ancient civilization. The influence also of such a distinction upon the attributes and concept of the divinity is obviously far-reaching; and only the salient points and problems can be here set forth.

We need not wonder that for many aeons mankind should have remained in the particularist stage of religion, and that the advance to the belief in a god of all mankind, of the whole earth, and the whole universe should be so late and so difficult that it has not yet prevailed. The outlook of early man was limited to his own narrow region and to the patch of the heavens above it; if he was like some modern savages he was not always aware that the sun which rises to-day was the same as that which rose yesterday or which shines on another tribe a hundred miles away. His concept of deity then must follow his separatist concepts of nature. For those inquirers, indeed, of a former generation who believed that all mankind was once in the tribal totemistic stage, that each tribe had one totem only and that the totem became the special god of the tribe, an explanation why all early religion was particular and separatist was at once provided. But those of us who cherish those beliefs no longer need not be embarrassed for an explanation of the fact. Two dominant factors may be accepted as suggesting or dictating a particular society's devotion to one or more particular

deities: locality and sense of kinship. A special locality has been from time immemorial haunted by some god or goddess, for reasons often far beyond our ken; the aboriginal tribe or society that has lived there for many ages is whole-heartedly devoted to him or to her, and they are his own, perhaps his 'peculiar', people; or an alien tribe arrives and acquires the region and acquires gradually the same devotion to the cult which is deep-rooted in the soil. Thus Athens was the primeval home of the Minoan-Mycenean virgin-goddess Athena; but the Nordic Hellenic tribes who came down and settled round the Akropolis, and who had not known her in their northern home, became her special and beloved people, and scarcely left her even when Christianity gained possession of their rock. This is only a salient instance of what must have happened again and again in the settlements and migrations of tribes.

A still stronger tie is the feeling of kinship between the tribe or community and the divinity; and this might find expression in the belief that the divinity was the physical parent, the ancestor or ancestress of the tribe or of the royal or ruling families of it. Hence arose the sexual myths explaining the divine ancestry which belong to a barbaric phase of the religious imagination, found for instance in Scandinavia in respect of some of the royal houses and found broadcast in ancient Greece in respect of the leading Hellenic tribes; thus Zeus is the ancestor or paternal god of the Aiakidai, of the Pelopidai, and therefore of the later Dorians, Apollo as the

father of Ion is the ancestor of the Ionians, Poseidon of the Minyans. In Egypt it is only the royal dynasty that were of divine ancestry, the Pharaohs being the sons of the sun-god. On the other hand, in the earliest recorded stage of Hebrew religious thought, God has no physical kinship with man, and the children of Israel were a ' peculiar ' people because Jahwé called Abraham and their devotion to Jahwé arose from God's own election.

In any case, the sense of fellowship and intimacy uniting the tribe and the tribal god is fostered and strengthened by the sacrificial meal, the deep significance of which in the communities of Mediterranean culture has been the theme of Professor Robertson Smith's master-work, *The Religion of the Semites*. The tribal worshipper and his deity feasted together, and might be conceived to become thereby in a sense ' of one flesh '. In some communities this solemn meal might acquire a deeper sacramental character, the worshipper believing that he was partaking of food or drink that was possessed by the divine spirit. The potent influence of this sacrificial meal, whether sacramental or merely communal, upon the religious imagination and the moral and social life of the tribe or community has been impressively set forth by the above-mentioned writer.[1] The deity takes on the character of the fellow, the friend and helper of the tribe or society, the guardian of its social life, partaking of its loves and hatreds, assisting it in war against the tribal

[1] Vide specially *op. cit.* pp. 237–50.

enemy; while the temperamental differences of the peoples will develop his character and attributes differently. The Hellenic communities for the most part lived on terms of genial comradeship with their divine patrons, without brooding deeply upon them. But the Hebrew mind with its deeper sense of the awfulness and ineffable majesty of Jahwé, and with its intense conviction of the reality and moral authority of their tribal god, has evolved the highest ethical monotheism and the deepest belief in a personal god that the world has known.

This, then, is our debt to the tribal separatist religion. We may say that its narrowness has been redeemed by its strong intensity of feeling, whence have sprung these fruits for the world, garnered mainly from the tribal religion of a 'peculiar' people. It is easy, on the other hand, to recognize its drawbacks and the limited conception of Godhead that it implies. The tribal god may be cruel and pitiless in respect of aliens; the cruelty of Jahwé, a reflex of old Hebrew ferocity, is a blot on the older religion of Israel and its shadow remains in our own. The tribal god is a communal god and concerned mainly with the whole society and less with the individual soul; and this stage of society is adverse to the emergence of deep personal religion, just as it is adverse to the separate claims of the individual life. Also, the morality of the tribe, its moral responsibility is corporate, and the whole body must suffer for the sins of an individual; the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children; Jahwé visits

the offence of David upon the whole people; the deity sends a plague or a dearth upon the land where one person has sinned. There is some survival of this mode of thought even in our own culture; for in certain doctrine concerning the Atonement, as that through the sin of Adam all mankind are guilty, our own advanced theology bears the imprint of the old tribal theory of corporate responsibility, of which the converse doctrine is that one life may atone for the sin of the whole community; and that is the basis of much of our Christology.

As the tribe developed into the nation or into the Hellenic city-state with its passion for autonomy, religion retained its local and exclusive character, sometimes even intensified. To share in the worship was the privilege of the citizens, which might be and often was refused to the alien and the slave; and certain cults might be the exclusive privilege of certain families; or the priesthood might be in the hands of certain tribes, like the Levites or the Eumolpidai, that had become incorporated in the larger aggregate. In such a religion there is no spirit of propagandism, the Hellenic colonies do not preach Zeus and Apollo, though they might wisely admit the barbarians under pressure.

The small independent civic states of Greece, each based on some fusion of tribal groups, present the most salient examples of the strength and the weakness of civic, local, and national religion; for all the institutions of the Greek polis were permeated with religion, more deeply than was the case in any

other recorded society except the Hebraic ; and the life of the Hellenic community was far more varied and rich, more adapted to the free spirit of man than was that of Israel ; for, as has been said, in Hellas religion was a servant rather than a master. Attic literature and records afford many interesting illustrations of this unique interaction of the two spheres, the divine and the secular. The highest divinities become politicians, inspiring council in the council-chamber and in the assembly and are even supposed to preside over the orators' platform, deriving from these functions certain titles whereby they might be invoked. Apollo was elected as an annual magistrate at Miletos, Boreas was admitted and invoked as a citizen in Magna Graecia at the city of Thourioi ; perhaps the strangest phenomenon of all is an Attic inscription which invokes Athena as the embodiment of the democracy, the only example in history of that mode of government being regarded as part of the divine order of the State.

The contrast that such a society presents in this vital respect to our own or to any modern political community is glaring. We do not enjoy hearing our party orators speak religion, as did the Athenian in the age of Demosthenes ; we do not approve of preaching party politics in the pulpit. We try to keep our deepest religion away from the atmosphere of politicians, hoping to preserve its purity and truthfulness. Yet some touch of the old-world civic and national religion still lingers in our liturgies. We still pray for the king, the nobles, the commons,

and the magistracy, and for victory over the king's enemies; and the old tribal society would have found this part of our service most congenial. The Houses of Parliament pray for divine guidance in their counsels, just as the Athenian Boulé prayed; for we, like the people of ancient Athens, believe that the deity inspires counsels of political wisdom and righteousness; and there still may be some surviving who believe in the divine right of kings, as did the ancient Egyptian; and our liturgy still uses complimentary terms concerning our sovereign in commending him to the Most High. For the liturgy of a great historic church is the mirror of many ages.

The chief danger to which a society may be exposed by the narrow view of religion that we have called tribal is the danger lest the passionate devotion to the tribal god should engender a morbid excess of self-exaltation, quickening at last the belief that one's tribe is a 'chosen' people, divinely charged with the extermination of alien peoples of other gods. This belief is the momentous product of that view of the character and attributes of the deity that we may call particularist. It is irreconcilable with any humanitarian religion or with the higher belief in a Universal Father. History records the tragic issue of such a belief in the necessary destruction of Jerusalem; and the modern parody or base revival of this tribal vanity, the German attempt to substitute 'von Gott' for the God of mankind, contributed to the downfall of Germany. Wars of

religion, rightly so called, the outcome of the fanatical cruelty that prompts or justifies the extermination of aliens of different creed, are practically unknown in the ancient world, save in Judaic history; and in spite of the revelations of some of their older prophets, this spirit of fanaticism waxes fiercest in their later period, in the Maccabean wars and under the Roman Empire; and the tribal egotism of which it is a part is imprinted even on their later conception of a Messianic millennium. As the same spirit appears with devastating results in Islam, the conclusion has been drawn that it is a vice natural to the Semitic races; but the records of other Semitic peoples do not justify us in branding thus the Semitic character in general. We may explain the religious wars of Islam mainly by the Judaic tradition that deeply influenced Mahomet, partly also by the necessity he was under of alluring his followers by the hope of spoil. The self-inflicted agonies of earlier and later Christendom are the fatal consequence of the same Judaic tradition, from which the early Christian Church in accepting the Judaic canon was unable to free itself, and which engendered the dogma that God's pity and scheme of salvation are extended only to those who hold the right theory of his nature and follow the right worship, and that those who do not are outside the pale of his mercy or orthodox man's compassion. Even Puritanism, having escaped from the cruelties of Catholicism, was cruel in proportion as it was Judaic; and we can see the influence of the fierce tribal religious spirit

in the later controversies concerning the abolition of slavery. By the side of this alien element in our religion and wholly irreconcilable with it is the conception of an all-loving universal God, which was the birthright of Christianity.

The progress from the tribal-particularist phase to the universal concept of God is the most interesting event in our religious history; and we would wish to discern and understand the influences making for that development. It has sometimes been associated with the expansion of mighty empires, obliterating the narrow limits of tribe and small nation. Thus the astonishing outburst of the world-religion of the monotheist Ikhnaton has been naturally connected by Breasted with the great imperial extension of the Egyptian power, enfolding then the greater part of anterior Asia. Much also has been said and written concerning the essential help given to the propagation of so universalistic a religion as Christianity by the fact of the Roman Empire holding together in peace so many and such varied communities of men; and even the Paganism of this Empire was displaying the same universal spirit, as it was wont to fuse various local deities into one, and seemed striving to reach the conception of a universal God of mankind. And even the great kingdoms that emerged from the empire of Alexander show some signs of the same influence at work. The early monotheism of China, so far as it is discernible there, might also be connected with the far-reaching geographical extent of that realm.

But it by no means follows that the mere influence of a far-flung empire engenders in the advanced religious thinkers who are members of it the concept of a world-deity who is concerned equally with all mankind. The old Mesopotamian religion embraced a vast imperial society; but the Sumerian-Babylonian divinities, though one of them might be the creator of the whole world, are not clearly imagined as concerned with all mankind, but only with the 'dark-haired people'. A few incantations may designate Ishtar as 'the Mother of Gods and men',[1] but probably only in the sense that she is the procreative source of all physical life; and other formulae attached to the Highest Gods such as Enlil and Bel, 'Lord of the breath of life of Sumer', 'Lord of the Life of the Land',[2] do not reach to the height of such a concept as of a Universal Providence of all mankind. We have marked some approach to this in the early monotheism of Egypt and in the prophetic monotheism of Israel. But the people of Israel were not the people of a great empire. Nor were the Homeric Greeks; yet we find among them a glimmering of the same idea in that strange and pregnant Homeric phrase, 'Zeus the father of Gods and men', which as I have shown possessed no physical sense but only a moral or providential sense;[3] and we must not in this formula interpret

[1] Zimmern, *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*, (*K. A. T.*)[3], p. 430.

[2] *Greece and Babylon*, p. 160.

[3] Vide my *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 93.

'men' in a limited or national reference; for other Homeric utterances reveal the High God as more than a merely national God; he regards Greeks and Trojans alike: 'they are both a care to me, though they perish.' [1]

In fact Greece was the cradle of the humanitarian spirit. And those who in the former generation belittled its contribution to the development of higher religion ignored the significance of the rise of Orphism, a Dionysiac mystical religion, the first example in the world of the missionary spirit of propagandism; for it passed over the barriers of tribe, city, nation, and social status, proclaiming to all the world its message of salvation, which was based on the dogma of the kinship of man with God. Its votaries may not have been numerous or strongly influential. But in the fifth century Euripides stands forth as the poet-prophet of the humanitarian spirit. In his ethical and religious utterances we feel that the human soul is escaping the bondage of tribe and city and the narrower conceptions of kinship; as in his beautiful fragment

The whole heaven is open to the eagle's flight,
And to a noble man the whole earth is his fatherland.[2]

This free and expansive view is maintained also by Menander, the great master of the younger Attic comedy in the fourth century and like Euripides

[1] *Il.* 20. 21. It is noteworthy that II Esdras (7. 61) puts the opposite of this phrase into the mouth of the Most High: 'I will not grieve over the multitude of them that perish.'

[2] Stob, *Florileg.* 40, § 7 (Meineke, vol. 2, p. 65).

a moralist and preacher with a larger audience than the philosophers had. It is salient also in all Greek philosophy, even in the earliest Ionian and Pythagorean, in the Platonic and Aristotelian scarcely less than in the later Stoicism which endeavoured to found a philosophy harmonizing physics, ethics, and religion for the whole world. All the thinkers of these schools, when they discuss the nature of God and his relations to the world and to the human life and soul, speak in terms applicable to the whole cosmos and to the aggregate of mankind, and the narrowness of the old clan-religion, the religion of the tribe, the city, or the special group, nowhere appears.

The same impression is made on us by much of the higher Hebrew prophecy, and by many passages full of personal religious inspiration in the Babylonian and Vedic hymns. We discern in these the true utterance and voice of personal religion, in which the individual soul is in direct and tense communion with God ; and we may discern, what may seem like a paradox, that it is through the emergence of individualism in the sphere of ethics and religion that the concept of God is broadened and universalized till it rises wholly above the limitations of the social group, whether clan or empire, and is adequate for mankind as a whole. For the individual, when he can retreat from the group and strive in close and intense communion with the deity is probably never then conscious of himself as a member of a special social unit but only as a single self in

relation to the Highest Power. Such a retreat may imply egotism, in contrast with the altruism of social clan-worship ; but the individual at such moments, standing outside all social status, puts himself consciously or unconsciously on the plane of all the souls in the world, and hence could arise the world-concept of God as the Lord of all human life.

We have noted in a former lecture certain utterances in the various religions of the pregnant idea that the divinity deals directly with the soul or mind of man, which is regarded at times as in a special sense his shrine or temple or even identified with him. Certain moral religious implications, of philosophic as well as social significance, are involved in this idea. It may suggest the view, revolutionary of the old-world order, that if all souls are equal before God, slavery is unjustified ; but as Greece was the first home of modernism, it was only Greece that dared to draw this corollary, to which Christendom was blind for long. As against the narrow view of Aristotle that the barbarian is by nature intended for slavery, Philemon, an Attic poet of the fourth century, anticipates the doctrine of the American Revolution by declaring that ' no one is by nature born a slave '.[1]

Another corollary, entirely repugnant to the old clan-morality, is that vicarious punishment and vicarious atonement are unjust and against true religion ; the sins of the fathers shall not be visited on the children : the soul that sinneth it shall die.

[1] Frag. 39 (Meineke, *Frag. Com. Graec.* 4, p. 47).

We are familiar with the impressive deliverance of Ezekiel on this vital matter. It is not so well known that Theognis, a contemporary of his in distant Greece, had independently attained almost the same height of vision.[1] 'Father Zeus, would that this were the will of the Gods that he who deviseth unrighteousness in his soul should himself pay the penalty of his evil deeds and that the wickedness of the father should not become a curse to the children; but that the children of an unjust father whose hearts are set on righteousness . . . should never pay the penalty for the trespass of their sires.' Later Jewish thought was by no means enlightened on this point: 'did this man sin or his parents that he was born blind?' And our own Christology, as we have seen, is not yet delivered from the fetters of group-morality. It was left for Mahomet to take up the torch from Ezekiel and to champion the doctrine in religion of the sole responsibility of the individual: 'he who errs, errs only against his own soul, nor shall one burdened soul bear the burden of another;'[2] nor, as we have seen, does Mahomet allow of any mediator between the soul and God, as is allowed in an earthly monarchy between the individual and the ruler.

We may say then that under different inspirations the Hellene through clearness of bold thinking, the Hebrew through passion for righteousness, the mode of escape was shown from 'the sting of heredity', and that the development of personal religion

[1] ll. 732–40. [2] *Qur'an* (Palmer), Pt. II, p. 3.

quickened and facilitated the birth of the concept of a universal God standing everywhere in the same relation to the individual soul.

But one momentous inheritance from the old clan-religion that could fructify and expand in a larger setting was the belief in a kinship between God and man; this belief was often taken in a literal physical sense, as we have seen, and supposed to rest on real fact in the old tribe and the old city; then when men could come to regard themselves, as in the Stoic view, as citizens of the whole world, so Augustine's idea of a *Civitas Dei*, a city of God in which all men were brothers and united in fellowship with God, could arise. But the idea of the universal brotherhood of man remains a religious ideal, undeveloped and perhaps incapable of developing into any practical social form.

Meantime, the spirit of national separatism, though it is not allowed to determine or to dominate the conception of God and of his functions and attributes, asserts itself strongly in established worship. Some recent writers have expounded religion as essentially a social phenomenon. We may believe, certainly, that it began with the social unit; and the congregation of the faithful is the modern representative of the clan or the tribe. We are aware also of the powerful psychic stimulus conveyed to the individual by the soul-magnetism of the crowd engaged in a common service. But personal religion, though later in time, may be claimed to take precedence of the corporate in respect

of depth and height. The corporate or the congregational is hierarchic and conservative; the prophet, the seeker for a new revelation, must escape from the crowd into the wilderness for a time; and the history of progressive religion justifies the old belief, strongly held by the Cambridge Platonists, that God as the source of all soul-life reveals himself most profoundly to the individual soul in solitude.[1]

[1] Vide *Cambridge Platonists* (Benjamin Whichcote), p. 43.

# VI

## THE POLITICAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

Having in the brief exposition of the former lectures considered the essential traits and implications of tribal or group-religion, we may next investigate those attributes usually imputed to the divinity in the higher religions that relate him or her directly to the political life of the people.

A preliminary illustration has been given of the vital interaction between religion and politics in ancient Greece, and it is worth dwelling on this particular example, for no other society in our history affords such rich material for our present purpose. By a variety of titles, invocations, and special cults, the leading personalities of the Hellenic pantheon were made in some way responsible for or protective of the various organizations of the social and civic life, for the marriage-bond, for the family-circle of kinsmen, for the grouping into phratries and demes, for the settlement of the city or polis, the most momentous and characteristic product of the political genius of Greece, and finally, for such higher ideals as at times glimmered upon the Hellenic vision—the confederacy of states into some form of Pan-Hellenic union. We have indeed reason to suppose that many of the Hellenic states

developed from a religious origin, the temple with its adjacent buildings forming the nucleus of an expanding settlement: at least their name suggests such an origin as this for Athens—from the temple of Athena—and for some other cities of lesser significance. In the separate city-cults, Zeus and Athena figure most prominently as the inspirers of counsel; and when the members of the Athenian council prayed to them before each meeting for good guidance, we must believe that they were in earnest; and how real was the belief at Athens in the political interests of Athena may be gathered from the record that his opponents endeavoured to thwart Themistocles' policy of maritime expansion by appealing to the prejudices of the old goddess of the land who might object to her people abandoning agriculture for seafaring.

But for Greece in general no part of the established religion had such political significance as the Apolline oracle at Delphi. It was consulted by legislators engaged in framing a new code; by statesmen anxious to heal civic feuds; by leaders of colonies seeking direction in the choice of new sites; by cities afflicted with a bad conscience or labouring under some calamity or sense of approaching danger. And Apollo contributed much to the development of criminal law and assisted in relieving society from the tyranny of the blood-feud. These facts are familiar to the student of Greek religion. Those who are unfamiliar with the Greek temperament and with the atmosphere of Greek society might

draw from them the seriously erroneous conclusion that that society like the Hebrew was theocratic. The Hellene was saved from this by his eminently secular and progressive practical trend of spirit: the secular statesmen controlled and used the religion and the priesthood: the Delphic oracle is not allowed to become the vicegerent of God.

From the early records of the other races whom we call Aryans scarcely any evidence is forthcoming that bears on the present inquiry. Early Roman religion was variously and dexterously used for political purposes; but no cult or cult-title or invocation suggests the idea that the Roman senate or the Comitia or the law-courts were sanctioned or directed by divine guidance; we have only the faint and feeble story of Numa being inspired by the nymph Egeria; and the use of the Sibylline books could not engender any serious belief that the High God was the source of wise counsel. The Zarathustrian religion was wholly inspired according to its own credentials by Ahura Mazdāh, but it had no concern at all with political life. Nor in the rich and varied religious literature of Vedic India, where so many aspects of the deities are so impressively presented, do we find any recognition of them as political powers or as the source of wise state-counsel, or any figure corresponding to Zeus of the city or Athena of the council-chamber. The religious imagination of India, profound, vague, and metaphysical as it was, had no concern with social institutions. On the other hand, from the records

of the pre-Christian Teutonic communities some slight evidence is forthcoming. The Batavian cohorts on our Hadrian's wall dedicated an altar to 'Mars Thingsus'[1]: this is the old Teutonic-Scandinavian war-god Twys or Tyr, and the epithet shows him as the president of the 'Ting', the free-assembly of our forefathers, the source of much of our free political constitution. We cannot determine from this inscription whether the God was imagined as merely protecting the peace of the Ting or also as inspiring the counsels delivered there. But we know that the Teutonic-Scandinavian mind was advancing towards some higher religious ideas before the adoption of Christianity; according to the sagas the settlement of Iceland was suggested to individual chieftains by Thor; and that some god was the source of tribal law is confirmed by a Frisian tradition.[2] It is possible then that in the days before Christianity the higher Teutonic mind was capable of the concept that the Godhead was the inspirer of political counsel and concerned with the state-organization.

But outside Hellas, it is the Semitic communities, Israel and Babylonia, that present this belief most vividly. Before Jahwé had dictated to Moses his ordinances for the tribes of Israel, Hammurabi had received the first secular legislative code in the world directly from the hands of the sun-god Shamash; and an impressive Babylonian relief exhibits him

[1] *E. R. E.* vol. 6, p. 304.

[2] Vide Golther, *Handbuch der Germanischen Mythologie*, p. 617.

at this solemn moment. We have noted before[1] the close association of Shamash with law and justice; we have also the interesting record that annually in the Hall of Assembly at Esagila the Council of the Gods under the presidency of Nebo decided the destiny of the King and the Empire for the ensuing year;[2] we may suppose that these utterances were answers to questions prepared by the king and the priests; the practice then, that was only occasionally adopted by the Kings of Israel and Judah, of seeking through the prophets political counsel from God was part of the regular machinery of government in Babylonia. And in the various periods of this immemorial empire, there was a tendency to regard the kings as the fosterlings of the deities, and the King and the God together as the common source of Law and Order. Also, we have evidence, slighter but suggesting the same belief, in regard to the other polytheistic Semitic communities.

The pyramid-texts of Egypt, as recently expounded by Breasted,[3] reveal the same interdependence of government and religion. One special god, Thoth the God of Truth, may be the guardian of legal procedure; but the Pharaoh incarnates the Highest God, Ré, and he and his officials speak with the voice of Ré when they pronounce the Law and deliver just decisions.

[1] Vide pp. 105–6.

[2] Langdon, *Expositor*, 1909, p. 149; cf. Jeremias, *s.v.* 'Nebo' in Roscher, *Lexikon*, 3, p. 55.

[3] *Op. cit.*, e. g. p. 224.

The monarchical form of society, both in its primitive stage and under the great empires of the ancient world, has contributed more than any other to the early growth of religion ; the idea of the god-king or the semi-divine ruler having been a potent force, as Sir James Frazer has expounded to us with great skill and learning, in the evolution of early society.

We may also surmise that the splendour of the old monarchies, especially when they expanded into mighty empires, coloured and heightened men's imagination of the deity and the divine attributes. The magnificence of the earthly court was transferred to the celestial ; the unapproachable majesty of the King was translated into the ineffable majesty of God ; the hopeful belief of the people in the benevolence of the King as the shepherd of his people may have assisted the growth of the conviction that benevolence and compassionateness were essential traits of the King of Kings, the august phrase bequeathed to us from the old social order.

The belief in the political character and interests of the deity has varying social results according to the form in which it is expressed. If it establishes an accepted tradition that the main structure and ordinances of society are of divine origin, it is a strong conservative force. Some such tradition is not uncommonly found among savage communities, where the tribal rites and customs are frequently supposed to have been originated by some mysterious ancient Father or Fathers of the tribe, who have

passed away into the spirit-land and on whose authority they must be maintained. It is probable that the imposition of any kind of social order and its maintenance when imposed upon so difficult and anarchic an animal as man was greatly helped by this belief. This might develop in the societies of higher culture into the dogma that the social order was dictated by the High Gods and was therefore inviolable. Fortunately for human progress this was never maintained in earnestness and thoroughness save in Israel and Islam, those societies for whom the Old Testament and Koran served as the basis for secular law. The conservatism of Sparta might have been fortified to some extent by the belief that the Lycurgean constitution had been blessed by Apollo, even if it had not emanated from him. But after the monarchic period in Greece, when any belief in monarchy as a divine institution had faded, the Hellenic communities, while usually consecrating all departments of their social life by some association with religion, were little inclined to render homage to any claim to divine origin that any of them might advance: a salient example of this is the struggle that arose at Athens in the earlier part of the fifth century between the democratic party and those who desired to maintain the privileges of the semi-sacred court of Areopagos. We have to accept the paradoxical fact that while ancient Greek religion, more than any other save the Hebraic, was interfused with politics, the Greek societies were the pioneers of all secular progress. On the other hand,

the tyranny of the Koran has been regarded as the cause of the political and social stagnation of most of the communities of Islam. And our own social history supplies us with many examples, as in the trials for witchcraft, the questions concerning slavery, the position of women, sabbatical observances, showing how the tyranny of the Bible has worked against progress towards humane and equitable legislation; and the bitter civil strife between the Crown and the Commons was associated with a biblical dogma concerning the divine right of kings. Of this dogma, once alive and momentous, there may be heard here and there only a faint echo; but the biblical belief in the divine origin of the monogamic marriage is still of strong avail in the sphere of legislation.

The old-world view of God the legislator, the author of the whole social system under which a particular community lives, probably survives nowhere outside Israel and Islam. But it may have left as a deposit in the mind of certain religious moralists a feeling of the divine sanctity of the abstract notion of law. In a striking fragment of Pindar Νόμος or Law is personified as 'the king of all mortal and immortal beings'; [1] and with this we may compare the eloquent phrase of Hooker: 'her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world.' [2]

But the other form of the recognition of the political character and interests of the divinity is

[1] Frag. 169. [2] *Eccl. Pol.* 1, p. 285.

the belief that he inspires the leaders of the State with wise counsel. This belief is wholly consistent with progress and with the outlook of the highest humanitarian religion. It is world-old and also modern and alive. It has been most powerful in the history of the Catholic Church, as enabling its Oecumenical Councils to escape from the bondage to the letter of their Sacred Books. It is still conventionally accepted in regard to our own legislative assemblies; for our Church of England liturgy contains the prayer uttered during the session of Parliament that God will direct their counsels to righteousness and his glory. If this belief has grown dim and faint in religious minds, the sordidness of much modern politics may be responsible; for the perception of divine agency in the world of public affairs can maintain itself strongly in the presence of tragic catastrophes and the agonies of war, but with difficulty in the depressing *milieu* of meanness and intrigue. Yet the religious experience that led the Greeks to invoke Zeus as 'Eubouleus', the giver of good council to the State, is essential to higher religion and will persist as long as a public religion based on a belief in a personal providential God persists.

The dogma that all 'good Thought' comes from God and can be maintained and quickened by communion with the High Power in prayer is impressively proclaimed by the Zarathustrian message as well as by our own Christian liturgy. It is the ethical limitation of the wider and vaguer idea that God is the source and author of all our thoughts and moods,

an idea which finds its earliest utterance in Homer [1] and which when its logical implications are realized is found to involve the repugnant and dangerous doctrine that the Divine Being is the author of our evil thoughts as well as our good, and that he may lead us into temptation to our undoing. It is illustrated poignantly by certain passages in the Old Testament; the story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac is unworthy of high religion, for the Supreme Being appears to be tempting his worshipper to a cruel act, merely, like a capricious Oriental monarch, to test his obedience; but a clearer instance of the view that God might be the direct and deliberate inspirer of evil counsel, luring a man to his ruin, is the narrative in the Book of Kings where God sends one of his own messengers in the form of a lying spirit to induce Ahab to go up against Ramoth-Gilead; [2] it is an exact parallel to Homer's story in the second book of the *Iliad* that Zeus sent to Agamemnon a lying dream to persuade him to take the field; to both stories Plato's severe judgement on the immoralities of mythology would apply. What more surprises is that the higher prophetic vision of Israel had not risen above this lower view; for Ezekiel maintains it strongly and explicitly: [3] 'if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I myself have deceived that prophet, and I will destroy him.' When we can consider in another connexion the problem of evil in the world and its relation to God, we shall have to note that the theology of the Old Testament presents God as the

[1] Vide *supra*, p. 58. [2] 1. 22. 20. [3] 14. 9.

author of evil as of good and therefore of evil counsel as of good counsel, and we are not surprised to find it part of Rabbinical teaching that God has implanted in man an 'evil imagination'. It is of greater significance for us that Christ himself, as he accepts current Jewish tradition in some other matters, appears to accept this also, if the phrase in his prayer 'Lead us not into temptation' has been rightly reported and understood. In our own sacred literature it was left for St. James in his general epistle to proclaim the doctrine that is more consonant with the highest conception of the divine nature and attributes: 'Let no man say when he is tempted, he is tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil,[1] neither tempteth he any man', an utterance which shows him in harmony here with the higher ethical thought of Greece and which might have saved him from Luther's unjust censure, who called his epistle 'an epistle of straw'.

The history of Christianity has had itself something to do with the severance and breach between the secular-political and the religious world, a severance still strongly influencing modern thought. The pregnant and wonderful text 'render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's' may have assisted the idea that Caesar's world and God's could be held separate; for various reasons early Christianity seemed strongly anti-political; and we must reckon with the rise of monasticism and with the evil part played by ecclesiastics in the sphere of politics and of rulers

[1] Or 'for God is not conversant with evil' (1. 13).

and statesmen in the sphere of religion to account for the current belief, often unexpressed but strong in many people of spiritual earnestness, that religion is something to be kept aloof from the sphere of political action. On the other hand, it is often urged by Christian philanthropists that certain measures of social reform are demanded by the spirit of Christianity or the direct teaching of Christ; and here obviously the old idea reappears of God the wise counsellor of the State. And we can still imagine it as possible or even probable that we may be called to take a decided part in some political controversy where the issues of right and wrong, the strife of the good spirit and the evil, are so clear and so solemn that some of the partisans will feel that exaltation and intensification of purpose, thought, and will which frequently engenders in men's minds the perception of divine inspiration real and operative in them; and such political strife would not be godless. Only our nauseating experience of the hypocrisy of those who have been wont to invoke the divine name for petty or base projects has made us shy of associating it with our daily politics.

One further general reflection of interest for history and still more for religion is suggested by our present theme. The idea that the deity directs the social and political life of man may naturally engender the view that all human history is the working-out of God's will. And those who believe that there is a discoverable purpose in that history, slowly realizing itself through the ages, may regard

that as God's purpose. Whether the belief that there is a philosophy of history in that sense still prevails may be doubted. But the only attempts that have been made to construct it are of no avail for us now: some such attempt, the only example in the ancient world, appears in the Old Testament, especially in the prophetic writings, where the history of mighty empires is explained as part of the general policy of God in dealing with his own peculiar people: the theory suffers from a general ignorance of history and the innate Hebraic egoism. A more modern and elaborate attempt to reconstruct such a philosophy is Hegel's; but as it leaves out nearly half the world, it does not appeal to us, and a distinguished thinker and writer has recently put forth the view that no philosophy of history, in the sense hitherto accepted, is possible.[1] We may admit that he is right, if by it we mean a discoverable complex formula summing up the effects of myriads of events and actions working towards some definite purposed end which is sure to be obtained; for history is partly at least the tangled interaction of the wills of millions of human individuals; and as we find it impossible to discover a formula that will exactly express the life-purpose of one individual, it is not likely that we shall find one adequate to the aggregate sum. Whether there is some other sense of a philosophy of history, wherein it is conceivable, does not now concern us.

What does concern us is the view that human

[1] Pringle-Pattison, 'The Philosophy of History', from the *Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol. xi.

history, such as our records reveal it, represents the will of God; that all public events have been willed or at least sanctioned by him. This strange dogma has often been expounded with earnest, even cheerful, conviction by poets and popular moralists from Homer downwards, and later Christendom does not seem to have doubted its orthodoxy or propriety. It is a singular example of man's thought working inorganically, one part out of connexion with another. For the dogma clashes hopelessly with the more essential doctrine of man's free-will and with the more essential concept of God's beneficence. To deal with the latter first, we may say that the deeper is a moral man's reading of history the more impossible the doctrine becomes for him that the drama of history is God's work. One's reason and imagination stagger at the proposition that a benign Power could be in any way responsible, let us say, for the slaughter of the Albigenses, the fall of Constantinople, the Spanish Inquisition, the Thirty Years' War, or the recent world-agony. The virtuous and religious Plutarch sagely observed that it is better to be an atheist than to insult God. And the old theory of divine judgements, that could cheaply explain every horror, belongs to the barbaric concept of divine vindictiveness that will be considered later. The sage-king, Wen of China (*circa* 1200 B. C.), judged better concerning the miseries of his realm when he told his people 'It is not God who has caused this evil time: but it is you who have strayed from the old paths'.[1]

[1] Giles, *Religion of Ancient China*, p. 21.

But another and equally serious difficulty arises for those who could believe that the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day was purposed by or was in some way fulfilling the purpose of God. Such a thought strikes at the belief in human free-will; for it implies that we are all puppets in God's hand, moved as he wills; it may also imply that though what we are doing seems evil and cruel it is made to serve some other purpose, merciful and beneficent, of his, that perhaps we cannot now discern. We are touching here the fringe of the question concerning the origin and explanation of evil, which cannot be discussed without raising the momentous question concerning the divine attributes of omnipotence and infinity; and if these lectures are able to deal with them, it can only be at the close. It is sufficient for the present purpose to make clear that if we maintain the doctrine that the human will is free, and that this freedom is an essential postulate for morality and higher religion and is a primary datum of fully developed consciousness, we cannot then say that human history represents God's purpose; for human history is the drama of human agents acting freely—under the pressure it may be of natural forces—for good or for evil. We may maintain indeed that man's free-will was given him by God, and this is part of God's cosmic purpose; but such freedom means freedom to choose evil rather than good, death rather than life. It is equally inconsistent optimism to speak of necessary progress or necessary amelioration of life; unless we are puppets in the hands of a beneficent power or

atoms obedient to some law of benignant nature, there is no such necessity ; progress means strenuous willing ; and through stupidity or indolence man may will regress, his own abasement, and destruction ; and by no religious logic can we justify the belief that God will prevent him.

But to maintain this is by no means to rule out the idea of divine action in human affairs on a large scale. To the depressing Epicurean doctrine, '*οὐδὲν ἐπιμελοῦνται οἱ θεοὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων*'—'the Gods have no care for human affairs'—we may oppose the higher thought of Homer : '*μέλουσί μοι ὀλλύμενοί περ*'—'they are all a care to me, though they perish'. The fortifying faith in the divine care for the human community may find expression in the doctrine that the thought and counsels of the good and wise man working for the State are inspired and maintained by his sought communion with the highest fount of good ; but man must himself make the effort, must will and plan the strife ; he then gains increase of strength as he feels himself the agent of God ; there is more profundity than is usual in homely proverbs in the popular saying 'God helps those who help themselves'. This is on the whole the wholesome message of Zarathustra, that God demands the help of the good man in his strife with evil, and without his help—the help of Good Thought—the triumph will not be won.[1]

[1] e. g. *Gathas*, Yasna 31, v. 22 (Moulton, E. Z. p. 355) : 'He (the man of understanding) shall be the most helpful companion for thee, O Mazdah Ahura.'

At least such a doctrine satisfies our imperious conviction of free-will and our craving for a belief in the divine concern for the life and fortunes of our State. But the whole question of God's operation on the world of evil goes far beyond the special inquiry of this lecture, and must be reserved.

There are still special points of interest that a complete historical account of the concept of a State-god must consider. Communities at certain periods have been possessed by a passionate devotion to particular political institutions and forms of social life ; if the passion is deep enough it may in a religious people be consecrated by religious association, and the attributes of a political deity may come to include a predilection for that particular form or institution. We have noted this in respect of monarchy, from which many of even our modern thoughts and phrases concerning the High God have been probably derived. We need not suppose that the peoples of the old-world monarchic empires had any passionate attachment to that mode of government ; they may not have been able to imagine any other ; the fact that the kings were the immemorial depositaries of the State-religion is sufficient explanation of the close association between kingship and Godhead. We have noted also how the Christian tradition has maintained the political-religious conception of the divine right of kings. On the other hand we have found in ancient Athens a religious consecration of democracy, and that the divinity of their State became a democrat. This example is

unique; for although the Puritans in the period of our civil war could fortify their anti-monarchical sentiments and their demand for freer Church-government and free political institutions by the authority of the Old Testament, the revolutionary enthusiasm of more recent times and the movement that has established democracy as a modern world-force have been on the whole non-religious. Apart from political forms, we are supposed to have inherited from our northern ancestors a passion for freedom; but it has never either among them or among us been consecrated as a moral religious ideal, save in the occasional utterances of some fervid revolutionary poets. For the Norseman freedom meant independence of central authority, the power to lead his own life with his family and followers and serfs around him in his own valley or in far-off Iceland. It was a secular and honorable craving, and so on the whole it has remained for us; we have never convincingly associated it as an ideal with God's nature or with any divine attribute; and if we hear occasionally such phrases as that Christ was a good democrat or the first communist, we reject them as repugnant paradoxes.

It was otherwise with the Hellenes in their period of greatness. In them the passion for freedom or local independence was of such strength that, like other overmastering passions which seemed to raise men above themselves, it demanded religious consecration and engendered an actual cult; and their own High God received the proud political title

Eleutherios, 'the free man's God'. By this was he worshipped at Plataea after the great battle which saved Greece and the Western world from Persia, and Simonides commemorated the institution of the cult by a striking epigram: 'Having driven out the Persian, the Hellenes raised an altar to Zeus the Free, a fair token of freedom for Hellas'. Elsewhere in the Greek world of the fifth century the same worship was established, commemorating a city's deliverance from the rule of a tyrant and indicating the same attribute of Zeus. There has been no other race that has adapted its religion so pliantly as the Hellene to the master-passions of the national soul.

Finally, we have to consider how the character and attributes of the State-deity have been coloured and determined by another department of public activity, namely war. At first thought the idea of a god of war may appear to separate and estrange the ancient and backward ideals of religion from the modern and more refined; and we must reckon seriously with a matter that so deeply concerns our religious thought and imagination.

As war has inevitably been hitherto the occasional occupation of all communities ancient and modern, primitive and civilized, a deity who is regarded as the leader of his people and their counsellor in public affairs must of necessity be concerned with it. And no deity of the ancient world-religions was so exalted or so benign as to be removed from any part in it. At one time the Hebrew psalmist may say of Jahwé, in a passage where the storm of battle is heard, 'he

maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth: he breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear in sunder'; [1] but another naïvely robust utterance in the triumph-song of Moses, which takes hold of us by its poetic force, declares: 'The Lord is a man of war;' [2] and again the Psalmist maintains: 'he teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight.' [3] We find that the same warlike character attached to most of the leading divinities in the polytheisms of the old world; most marked is the warrior-aspect of Marduk of Babylon, and Indra of the Vedic and later Indians, of the Teutonic-Scandinavian Tyr and Odin; it is only lacking, so far as appears from the records, in the deities of Egypt. The Mexican deities had, indeed, a special reason for taking a sympathetic interest in war, as they drew their food-supply from it. For only among this people is the belief found prevailing that the blood and flesh of the prisoners taken in war supplied the deities with their sole nourishment.[4] As regards Hellenic polytheism, the facts are of interest. As their deities were pre-eminently political, they assist the wars of their respective states, and some of them may even lead them into battle; and to most of them, even to Zeus, some warlike titles of worship are attached. But their peaceful attributes were far more pronounced and emphasized; and even in Homer, the aloofness of Zeus from the actual strife of the battle-field enhances the majesty of his figure. But the

[1] Psalms 46. 9. [2] Exodus 15. 3. [3] 144. 1; cf. 18. 34.
[4] Vide Payne, *History of the New World*, 1, p. 524.

Greeks had in Ares, what is rare to find in the religions of the world, a specialized god of war, whose activity was limited to that function. Ares, however, was probably of Thracian origin, and was held in little esteem and some repugnance by the majority of the Greek communities, who lost at an early period whatever they may have inherited from their northern ancestors of the Berserker rage of battle. This strange passion, overmastering a man and lifting him above himself, would naturally engender a belief in its daemoniac or divine origin ; and the emergence of a special war-daemon or war-god can be thus explained. Such a cult is only likely to be cherished by a warrior-class, and is likely to fade with increasing civilization, which always cools the animal passion for war. Where that passion is at its height, as at a certain period among the northern Teutons, we can discern how it colours the personalities of the religion. The belief in Valhalla as the paradise of those who fell in battle does not seem to have been a mere fiction of the court-sagamen. A similar belief prevailed in pre-Christian Mexico ; and we must attribute to it some influence on conduct both in Scandinavia and Mexico ; for a Spanish writer attests the desperate valour of the Indians, who seemed to enjoy dying in battle ;[1] and we may compare the similar effect of a like belief on the warriors of Islam.

We may formulate the facts thus : where a specialized war-god occurs in the more civilized

[1] Bernal Diaz, quoted by Payne, *op. cit.* 1, p. 528.

religions he is likely to acquire other and more beneficent attributes than the warlike, if he retains his power; on the other hand there is scarcely any theistic religion in the world in which the high deity or deities have been kept aloof from any concern in war. Looking at least at its past history we must say that the religion of Christendom forms no exception; it has been deeply infected with the bellicose tradition of the Old Testament, and in large areas inflamed with the warrior-spirit of the north; we discern this in much of the phraseology and metaphors of our liturgy and hymns, in a strong and naïve verse of our National Anthem, and in our prayers for victory over the King's enemies, while our prayer to be delivered 'from battle, murder, and sudden death' is not always sincere. The conscience of medieval Christianity, so far as I am aware, was not troubled in this matter, and felt no incongruity herein with the teaching of the New Testament or with the spirit of Christ: the wars of the Cross and the wars against heretics were particularly blessed, and were the most ferocious of all. The primitive Christian in the early days before the establishment had felt doubts whether the bearing of arms was consistent with his profession; but later such doubts faded away or were authoritatively reconciled with religion. They were not likely to trouble medieval Catholicism with its convenient system of absolutions, still less the later Protestants and Puritans, to whom the Old Testament was a revelation and an authority for conduct. But they have arisen

with force in some of the post-Reformation sects, Quakers and 'Christadelphians', who furnished some and probably the sincerest of the many 'conscientious objectors' who embarrassed us in the late war.

The old idea accepted and proclaimed by Judaism, Christianity, Mazdeism, and Islam that war against unbelievers was inspired by God, is extinct now and not likely to revive. The higher ethical thought of Greece, as represented by Plato, was content to regard war as a grim necessity to be accepted at times by the most law-abiding state. Apart from religious fanaticism, attempts have been made to moralize war as God's judgement on sinners; or as a purge that a kindly Providence might occasionally use to cure the rankness of a state or the world. Thus a Greek epic poet of the eighth century B. C. justifies the Trojan war as benevolently willed by Zeus to ease the earth of excessive population; and a similar view is grandiloquently expressed in the great verses, probably Shakespeare's, in the drama, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*—an invocation to the war-god—

> O great corrector of enormous times,
> Shaker of o'er-rank States . . . that heal'st with blood
> The earth when it is sick and cur'st the world
> Of the pleurisie of people.

But the question whether the highest religious thought will henceforth deem it degrading and blasphemous to associate the character and action of the supreme God with such a calamity and evil

as war, and whether in so associating him we have not been false to the Christian ideal as revealed by Christ, is a serious and difficult one both for morality and for religion. It is not disposed of by saying that war would be impossible if the spirit of Christ or the spirit of Buddha were to prevail wholly among all men. The question remains whether before such prevalence has been attained, which at present seems incalculably remote, it is for us a breach of ideal religion and religious morality to engage in any war at all. We are well aware that this has been maintained by Tolstoy and the pacificist sects on the strength mainly of a few passages in the Gospels containing utterances of Christ, to which they give a universal application, on the topic of non-resistance. Yet numbers of earnest Christians were convinced that when they took arms in the recent war they were fighting the cause of God; while others who did the same, feeling themselves responding to a deep and imperious moral call, were untroubled by religious casuistry. But it is unwise to leave a wide rift between our necessary action and our ideal theology; we should endeavour to adapt the one to the other, whichever one it be. It is open to us to say that the phrases concerning 'the turning of the left cheek' and non-resistance to evil are emergency-teaching only, spoken by Christ in the conviction of the nearness of the kingdom of God, and therefore not applicable, as Tolstoy chose to suppose, to all periods and circumstances of human life. Or we may suppose them to be regulative of

our private conduct only; that they were not intended to determine the duty of a citizen when the whole State was confronted with war. It is relevant also to remember that neither Christ nor his apostles anywhere condemn the profession of a soldier and that their words were uttered in such an atmosphere as the great peace of the mighty Roman Empire, when the possibility that a citizen might be called on to help the State in a life-and-death struggle, threatening to extinguish all civilization and with it all religion, was never contemplated. But we have to contemplate such a position. If then the attitude of Tolstoy and the pacificists threatens to lead to the extinction of all religion, we must call it bad religion or even irreligious; for it cannot be the highest religious ideal that necessitates action which might lead to the extirpation of religion. We should make our minds up about this, considering the contingencies that we may have to face.

We should also seriously take into account that human nature has certain moral promptings, instinctive or intuitive, so deep and so long-enduring that we dare to call them primeval; and it is not well for the vitality of any religion that it should ignore these. One of these is the prompting to defend the hearth and the home from the violator and the oppressor. We should not allow a religious ideal that would gainsay that prompting to pass unscrutinized and unchallenged; for a religion is not likely to have long-abiding force, divorced from our deepest instincts. We ought still then to find room

in our religious ideal for the happy and conscientious warrior. The utterances in the New Testament, even taken as the final pronouncement of the highest conceivable religion, do not make this impossible. It would only become impossible if our highest religious thought imposed on us the dogma that all life, at least all human life, is equally sacred in the eyes of God and therefore in all circumstances inviolable. But such a quasi-Buddhistic belief, which would condemn not only all war but our criminal code and much of our social economy, is neither dictated to us on the authority of our sacred books nor given us by our deepest experience of the world of nature and man. Death has its moral value at times as a deliverance from hopeless evil and as a condition of better life ; and it may conform better with our deepest religious perception to maintain that it is only good life that is sacred in the eyes of God. Therefore, a religion that satisfies our ethical and spiritual ideas and is yet workable by a State in the present condition of the world need not discard the old-world concept of a God of righteousness who inspires men at certain crises with the will to war ; while we may purify that concept of barbarism and refine away the crudeness with which it is embodied in parts of our liturgy.

# VII

## THE MORAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

The inquiry in the former lecture was limited to the political aspect of the deity as the ruler of the State. The present theme, the investigation of the moral attributes attached to the Godhead, is wider, for it deals with the relation of the deity not only to the social life but also to the soul-life of the individual. The idea of a moral deity, the guardian of the moral order, is a human rather than a cosmic conception, for divine morality is a reflex of human ethic raised to its highest imaginable power.

The concept of God as good and beneficent may be maintained to be an *a priori* postulate of higher theistic religion. Yet there is a long history behind it, showing progress and evolution at certain periods of our mental life. It may be asked whether the history of religion shows the prevalence at any period of a belief in an evil God. We might expect to find it in the earlier thought of man; for if, as we have reason to suppose, he was led to affirm the existence of a beneficent high power partly by his personal experience that his impulses towards good came to him from a higher source outside himself, he was liable to a similar perception of the demoniac source of his evil passions; and if the one projected a beneficent deity, the other might be expected to project a maleficent.

Another likely motive for the assumption of malevolent supernatural powers is the observation of nature, in which the destructive and terrible forces are at least as powerful and as obvious as the kindly.

It is difficult to sum up the multifarious evidence concerning the savage mind; but generally it is near to the truth to say that for most savage communities the belief is attested in a good and kindly God or spirit, who however is often regarded as too remote or too indolent for worship; so that most of the religious rites are concerned with the propitiation or the repelling of evil spirits. Also, in certain cases it is conceivable that one of these evil spirits may have risen to the status of a deity without discarding his evil nature.

We have also in our appreciation of the polytheisms of the peoples of the higher culture to recognize that the idea of goodness as an essential attribute of God by no means prevailed everywhere even in the organized worship and established belief, not to speak of the immoralities of casual mythology. Indra in Vedic literature, Set in the pyramid-texts of Egypt, Ares in Homeric poetry, are presented more or less as evil gods, at least at times. The poet of the *Odyssey* reveals a belief or half-belief that the god of the sea delights in drowning men.[1] The high-thinking Aeschylus, the champion of the idea of monotheism and of the supreme righteousness of Zeus, yet represents him in the tragedy of *Prometheus*

[1] 13. 173 (he is there on the moral level of folk-lore).

*Bound* as the enemy of man, grudging him his good luck and tormenting his benefactor. And we may regard it as probable that the long-abiding belief in evil spirits, jealous, irritable, and vindictive, coloured and infected at times some of the attributes and imagined actions of the higher divinities; and some one of them, generally beneficent, might even be worshipped under a malevolent title. We are also well acquainted with a pessimistic and immoral trend in folk-lore and mythology, which the higher ethical religion of the community is not always able to control or to purify.

Yet it is a fact of great significance that the history of religions nowhere presents us with the phenomenon of a High God conceived as malevolent and definitely accepted by the worshipper as such: unless we are to admit that Ahriman in the Zarathustrian system was of this type. But Moulton has given strong reasons for believing that this apparent equality of Ahriman, the evil god, with Ahura Mazdāh in a dualistic world was not part of the original message delivered by Zarathustra, but was a degeneracy in later Magianism; in any case there is no evidence that Ahriman received any kind of worship from the good Mazdean, who was his mortal foe. And a god who receives no worship may be a cosmic force but does not belong to positive religion. We must not take as evidence of belief in an evil god passages in higher religious literature that lay stress on the terrible aspect of the deity as a Destroyer; for instance, the terrible and destructive power of the Word is

emphasized in certain Babylonian hymns,[1] yet the High Powers of Sumeria and Babylon were merciful and beneficent; and in Indian polytheism where Siva looms large as a demoniac destroyer, he is yet 'one of the three appearances of the Father-God with Brahma the Creator and Krishna the Protector'.[2]

We must not be misled in our judgement of the figures of many polytheisms by the cruelty or impurity we may discern in some part of their ritual. A deity who demanded human sacrifice or the sacrifice of virginity need not therefore be regarded by the worshipper as evil or malevolent. The Mexican deities for their cruelty appeared as devils even to the Spaniards; but to the Mexican they were kindly powers guarding the welfare and the moral code of their worshippers; and the cruel ritual persisted by the side of a high morality instinct with religious feeling. There is the frequent paradox of anti-moral rites clashing with the higher religious thought and ethic of the people who maintain them. Nevertheless they do not prevail against the belief in the goodness and beneficence of the High God.

It has been suggested in a previous lecture that that faith was engendered and prompted by the necessities of the worshipper and by his prayers against evils and for forgiveness of sins; in order to give hope for the fulfilment of his prayers a benevo-

[1] Langdon, *Babylonian and Sumerian Hymns*, 1, p. 411.

[2] MacNicol, *op. cit.* p. 92.

lent and merciful nature must be imputed to the deity addressed. This is sufficient to explain why the religions of the world had no place for an Ahriman.

In studying the content of the various moral concepts that define the character and attributes of the deity we must always bear in mind that these reflect the changing morality of human society at different periods, and nowhere so clearly as in the moral sphere does our imagination of the Godhead reveal the advance from cruder to more refined thought.

In all the higher religions of the older world the most prominent attribute of the divine character has been justice. We should expect this, for the chief function of the divinity, as dealt with in the preceding lecture, was to preserve the social order and the right relations between man and man, and justice is an essential virtue equally for the State and for private life: therefore, failing man's justice, man relies on God to protect him and to punish the unjust. In the Old Testament this is the dominant aspect of the deity. It is also dominant in the Koran as part of Mahomet's message: 'We did send to you the Book and the balance, that men might stand by Justice.'[1] Greek thought was at least as enthusiastic as the Judaic in exalting justice as a divine virtue and function, personifying Dike as the daughter of Zeus; and no poet or prophet has ever glorified it in such noble words as Euripides, who speaks of 'the golden-gleaming countenance of

[1] 57. 25.

Justice, nor is evening-star nor morning-star so wonderful as this '.[1] And Greek imagination refined the concept more sympathetically than the Hebraic or the Islamic, extending the idea beyond the world of man to the world of animals.[2] Being a practical and social rather than a metaphysical and cosmic idea it does not so interest the mind of the Vedic theologian: in the Vedic system we might say that it was subsumed under Dharma, the Law of Life and the world, personified at times as a God.[3]

This belief, fundamental in the higher religions of the older societies, that God is the just Providence of the world, was often brought up against the ugly facts of life, and the shock gave rise to the dark problem of moral casuistry, the apparent prosperity of the unjust and the afflictions of the just. It is of interest to mark the various solutions attempted. The *locus classicus*, the Book of Job, finds no solution at all. But in one passage of the Psalms the easy solution is offered that we must not judge too hastily of God, must give time for his judgements to strike, and the Psalmist is sure that at last before the end of their lives the unjust is cast down and the just raised up. And sometimes the divine justice is exalted in this respect at the expense of man's—'The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small: though He stands and waits with patience, with exactness grinds he all';[4] or a still

[1] Nauck, Frag. 486.
[2] e. g. Archil. Frag. 88.
[3] Keith, *op. cit.* p. 70.
[4] Sextus Empiricus, πρὸς γραμματικούς, 287.

better apology is suggested by Solon: 'God is not like a hasty-tempered man, venting his anger at once on the occasion of every wrong.'[1] Meredith's expression of the same thought is masterly, if somewhat 'pagan':

> Forgetful is green earth: the Gods alone
> Remember everlastingly: they strike
> Remorselessly, and ever like for like.
> By their great memories the Gods are known.

This view is more thoughtful than that of the average mind. But it is not confirmed by invariable experience, and meantime the just man suffers and the unjust prospers.

The idea of belated justice has also suggested another solution, namely that though the unjust man will escape punishment in his own life, retribution will fall upon his children and his children's children; the theory of vicarious punishment familiar to the old world and prominent in the Old Testament. We have already considered this and observed how it was challenged by advanced ethical thinkers as early as the sixth century B. C. It belongs to the crude plane of social thought before the emergence of the sense of the individual's free responsibility.

Another and more fertile solution that has deeply influenced the life of more than one religion is the belief in a posthumous judgement. As faith in a just deity could not be reconciled with the facts of this world, we must wait for the final consummation and

[1] Frag. 13, l. 25.

triumph of this justice in the life to come. The simplest expression of this idea would seem to be that each individual would be judged by a divine power immediately after death and his due reward or punishment would be meted out to him. Among the higher religions of the old world this was most clearly expressed in the Egyptian ; and the type of the angel weighing the souls that appears in Christian representations of the Day of Judgement was derived from Egyptian sepulchral art. The idea of separate and individual judgement following immediately upon death is found clearly shown in Etruscan tomb-paintings, where a genius of death is shown writing on a scroll.[1] We find a glimpse of the same belief in Aeschylus who speaks of Hades, the Lord of the lower world, as inscribing on tablets the deeds of each man's life.[2] The same theory rules the Apocalypse of Peter, and though not accepted as orthodox must have kept its hold on the popular mind through many centuries ; for we note that the greatest poet of medieval Christendom has presented throughout the whole of his *Divina Commedia* no other than this simpler form of the belief in posthumous judgement.[3]

More grandiose and awe-inspiring was the imagination of a great day of universal judgement, a cosmic catastrophe, which was to be not only the full and perfect consummation of God's justice, but the end of all created things. The Zarathustrian religion was the first to give expression to such a belief. Next it

[1] See Poulsen, *Etruscan Tombs*, p. 54. [2] *Eumen.* 273.
[3] Vide Burkitt, *Schweich Lectures*, 1913, pp. 44–5.

appears in power and force in Israel, shaping the vision of the Jewish Apocalypses; and Christianity, deriving it thence, has made it hitherto the keystone of orthodox faith. No other dogma has exercised so momentous an influence on life and conduct, or has coloured so deeply the minds and the moods of men and their theory of human life. At times it has worked with such morbid influence upon certain imaginations as to darken wholly the earthly life and to belittle its value, with uncivilizing and anti-social effects. We are chiefly concerned with it here as an expression of man's thoughts concerning the divine justice. If we reflect on the various visions of judgement and the discourses on the theme contained in a vast body of literature sacred and profane, the Jewish apocalyptic books, the writings of the Christian fathers, the creeds of the Church, the works of the theologians of the Middle Ages and the Reformation and post-Reformation periods down to recent times, we discern how the ideas of divine justice embodied in them have been infected with human passion, human vindictiveness and intolerance, and are dictated by ethical standards of action that are no longer accepted by the highest modern thought. For throughout this long period the award of salvation and happy immortality has been made to depend not on pure righteousness, but on dogmatic belief, ceremonial sacraments, or, in Gnostic systems, on the knowledge of certain formulae; therefore St. Augustine is obliged to relegate the unbaptized infant and the virtuous Pagan to hell. But if it is

repugnant to our thought and to our highest conception of divine justice that a man's life should be judged by his dogmatic creed, still more repugnant to us is the doctrine of eternal damnation, a doctrine that is obviously losing its hold on the popular religious mind and is no longer clamant in our pulpits. Some of our leading theological scholars and ecclesiastics proffer the humaner suggestion that the hopeless souls are not punished after death but extinguished, a dispensation which Milton's Belial eloquently declares is worse than Hell—

> *for who would lose,*
> Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
> Those thoughts that wander through eternity,
> To perish rather, swallowed up and lost
> In the wide womb of uncreated night?

But the archangel, like his poet, was a highly intellectual spirit. Painless extinction has probably no terrors for the multitude.

We scarcely seem to realize how great is this silent revolution in our religion; for we are abandoning the doctrine silently on the whole, without the intellectual labour of disproving it or of reconciling our abandonment with the authority of Scripture; we abandon it merely with deep instinctive abhorrence; and with a higher intuition of God's justice we refuse to stain it with the cruelty with which the theologians of many ages, Jewish, Christian, and Moslem have constructed their visions of Hell. In places these visions reveal the savage vindictiveness of man's nature stirred up by tribulation from its

primitive depths: and at times they display that ugliest of all human defects, which the Greeks called ἐπιχαιρεκακία and the Germans call *Schadenfreude* and for which our language happily has no word, exultation over the miseries of others. In the tragic history of this belief we are reminded of Euripides' aphorism: 'Men impute their evil nature to God.'

The Hellenes, though they held some theory of Hell which was deepened by Orphism, were saved generally by their temperament from brooding on it with that insistence which has darkened the imagination of so many of the Christian and Moslem world. And Neoplatonism could at least expunge the idea of cruelty and vindictiveness from the character of God by interpreting Hell as a state of the mind: the true Hell is the life of the wicked man: this thought may have suggested certain great lines to Marlow and to Milton as 'why, this is Hell nor am I out of it'; 'Which way I fly is Hell, myself am Hell.' And at least one early Christian father could rise above the orthodox view, namely Origen, who maintained that all God's punishments were purgative merely, not vindictive, and that ultimately all souls will be saved.[1]

The darker side of the traditional doctrine of the Day of Judgement rests on an ethical theory of justice, human and divine, that is called the vindictive theory—'good must be meted out for good, evil for evil.' Jewish theology never seems to have risen above this in its exposition of the ultimate

[1] Vide Inge's *Plotinus*, 2, pp. 17–19.

divine purpose. And the defect of the Jewish presentation of God in much of the Old Testament is the imputation to him of strong vindictiveness with liability to such passing human emotions as rage, fury, jealousy: hence the thoughtful and refined heretic Marcion pronounced the God of the Jews just but not wholly good. And Christianity down to our own day has been in its doctrine of judgement in bondage to the Judaic spirit, of which it inherited a large measure from the beginning.

The vindictive theory as it is passing from our secular, ethical, and legal systems, will probably pass wholly from our religions.[1] It was first challenged, as we should expect, by the humanitarian ethics and philosophy of the Greeks. In conformity with Plato's theory of human punishment, that its intention should be reformative and remedial only, Greek speculation on the whole purified God's justice of any element of vindictiveness and explained it as directed to the good of mankind or the whole cosmos. This was part of a more general advance in thought, of which we have seen the first glimmering in Homer,[2] suggesting a conviction that the Gods send no evil to men, either in this life or the next; or that apparent evil is in reality a blessing. It is their own sins that injure men, or their ignorance

[1] The Cambridge Platonists, unlike their master, have not wholly abandoned it; e. g. Campagnac, *Cambridge Platonists*, p. 39. The last conspicuous champion of it in modern philosophy was Kant; and his theory shows a strange atavistic survival of the savage spirit of the blood-feud in this harmless sedentary man.

[2] *Od.* 1. 31.

of God, but in no case God's anger, for anger is alien to the nature of God,[1] and envy has no place in the divine circle.[2] We might conclude from passages in Plato's *Republic* that he could condemn the Christian traditional doctrine of the Day of Judgement on the view that it tends to base morality on a system of rewards and punishments and thereby to degrade its essential value: the true value of morality, and especially of justice, according to the highest teaching of Greek ethic is that it assimilates man to God.[3] And the problem raised by the Book of Job, to which the Apocalypses claimed to give the final answer, was avoided altogether by the Aristotelian theory that God is not concerned at all with the dispensation of external advantages but only with the spiritual life,[4] man's higher part.

Nevertheless, in Hellenic as in other religions, the idea of vengeance as a divine function and the cult of God the Avenger were retained by the popular faith, wherever faith in a personal deity remained. But in the later period the interpretation of the divine justice and retribution was deepened by the belief, which is expressed occasionally in the Greek as in the Hebraic literature, that God punishes not only outward acts of wrong but sins of the heart and evil intention ;[5] and thus the later conscience could deliver itself from the grim terrors of the older moral

[1] Pythagorean maxim, Mullach, *Frag. Phil. Graec.* 1, p. 497.
[2] Plat. *Phaedr.* p. 247 A.
[3] Plato, *Theaet.* p. 176 B.
[4] *Magn. Moral.* 2, c. viii.
[5] Vide my *Higher Aspects of Greek Religion*, p. 143.

code, whereby certain acts, though committed innocently or by accident, inevitably brought down the wrath of God.

At the same time, both in Greece and in Israel and in certain later societies of Europe and elsewhere, the popular beliefs concerning the divine dispensation both in this world and the next contain a crude and non-moral element, in respect namely to the doctrine of 'Nemesis'. In certain applications the doctrine admitted satisfactory moral justification; it had also the social value of preaching moderation and decorum in act and speech; it repressed the insolence of the braggart and excessive exultation over the fallen foe: 'it is not lawful to exult over the slain,' and Homer in this phrase [1] uses a term that implies an offence against the Gods. But in one of its commonest applications, namely in the belief that great prosperity was in itself dangerous, apart from the mental qualities it might engender, because it was likely to arouse divine envy or jealousy, the doctrine is non-moral and has an evil ancestry; for it can be proved to descend from the savage belief in the ubiquity of evil demons who grudge man his good luck and try to spoil it, a superstition still prevalent in Mediterranean lands, which terrifies the peasant woman if she hears her child or her

[1] *Od.* 22. 412. The same rule is prescribed in Proverbs, 24. 17, 18, but the motive given for it is offensive: 'Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth: and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: lest the Lord see it and it displease him and he turn away his wrath from him'; this is malice masking as morality.

needlework highly praised. This is the φθόνος or the evil eye of the Gods, an evil attribute that came from polydaemonism into theism. The Greek philosophers and the poet Aeschylus protested and tried to raise the minds of their race above the low superstition; but many of us still 'touch wood'. It is more serious that it should have coloured men's imaginations of the judgement after death, and have suggested the theory that the dispensation of happiness and unhappiness in the next world will be the exact reversal of that which prevails in this, so as to make things equal as between one world and the other. It strangely appears as the motive of the parable of Dives and Lazarus, and on the surface of such beatitudes as 'blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh';[1] and in the counter-utterance 'woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation'.[2] In such passages we have a picture of the two worlds as each mechanically adjusting the inequalities of the other; and such a vision of judgement differs *toto caelo* from that other wherein the divine justice is dispensed according to the tests of righteousness, faith, and good works.

The attribute of justice, though essential to the conception of a righteous Ruler of the world, is naturally tempered in all the higher religions with the humaner qualities of pitifulness and mercifulness; for, as we have seen, it was inevitable that the worshipper, suffering from his own wrongdoing and

[1] Luke 6. 21. [2] *Ib.* 6. 24.

from the evils of the world, should, as religion developed, ascribe to his divinity such qualities as those whereby alone He might be moved to forgive and to heal him. Therefore, however grim and terrible the deity may be presented habitually in the popular mythology or theology, he is likely to be invoked in some occasional prayer or liturgy as 'the Merciful' or the 'Compassionate'. The Babylonian Marduk, imagined generally as terrible, is yet praised 'as the Compassionate among the Gods, thou who lovest the awakening of the dead'.[1] The dominant presentation of Jahwé in the Old Testament is stern and relentless, and this has darkened our later theology, especially the Protestant; but the prophetic writings and the Psalms give often deep and beautiful expression to the idea of a merciful God; and the apocryphal epistle of Jeremiah includes among the tests of true Godhead 'to show mercy unto the widow and to do good to the fatherless'.[2] Even Islam, which emphasized even more than Israel the relentlessness of God against sinners and unbelievers, has yet the other aspect of him vividly presented by Mahomet, who prefaces his chapters in the *Qur'an* with the formula 'in the name of the Merciful and Compassionate God';[3] and among the ninety-nine 'good names' by which he

[1] Roscher, *Lexikon*, 2, p. 2355.

[2] 38–9.

[3] Palmer (*Qur'an*, p. lxviii) is of opinion that this is borrowed from the Zoroastrian formula 'in the name of God the merciful, the just'.

is invoked by the Muslim occur such as 'the Merciful, the Clement, the Pardoner, the Forgiver'.[1]

In the humanitarian religion of Greece, it is generally true that the merciful aspect of the High God is more prominent than the vindictive, even in the mythology which is so often on a lower plane than the actual worship. There were no cosmic and no human myths in which Zeus appeared as the destroyer on a great scale, condemning hosts of conquered angels or powers to everlasting torment.[2] Having conquered the Titans Zeus released them; and this divine legend is quoted by Pindar as a lesson to men to forgive their own enemies.[3] The merciful character of Zeus is expressed in many cults and cult-epithets. He is Αἰδοῖος, the Pitiful one, and Pity was personified as a divine emanation; and the altars erected to her show that the refined thought of Sophocles, beautifully expressed in the *Oedipus Coloneus*,[4] 'Pity shares the throne of Zeus, his peer in power over all the deeds of men', was not merely the thought of a gifted and advanced thinker, but had penetrated the popular religion. And whatever power such faith had over conduct, there was real faith in the heart of the normal citizen that Zeus maintained the cause of the widow

[1] *Ib.* p. lxvii.

[2] The story of the Deluge and the Cilician story of Typhoeus are almost certainly borrowed from Mesopotamia.

[3] *Pyth.* 4. 291.

[4] l. 1275: cf. 'He wants nothing of a God but eternity, and a heaven to throne in. Yes, mercy, if you report him truly.' Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, Act v, sc. iv.

and the fatherless and had pity for the outcast and oppressed. This human view of the essential attributes of divinity is specially marked in the Greek literature of the fourth century, and is reflected in certain utterances of the Delphic oracle on questions of private morality: 'God pardons all that is done under stress of necessity' [1] is a pregnant aphorism that is parallel to the Euripidean 'the divinity is not senseless, but knows how to make allowances'.[2]

The recognition of mercifulness and pity as the dominant attributes of the High God might have a momentous influence on the social-ethical code, if it brought the conviction that active philanthropic service was a primary duty of each member of the community. It is the distinction of the New Testament that it sets forth this idea in full light. The Christian Churches have kept it bright through all the ages, and it glows most vividly to-day. Later Judaism also cherished it, and Islam accepted it. But in the other religions of ancient culture it nowhere appears, save faintly in a few Egyptian texts: we find for instance in the Book of the Dead a phrase that strangely recalls certain passages in the New Testament, occurring in the appeal of the dead soul to Osiris—'I have lived by the Truth: I have propitiated God by my love: I have given bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, garments to the naked.' [3] Hellenic ethics were fully conversant with

[1] Plut. *De Pyth. Orac.* p. 404 B. [2] *Iph. Aul.* 394.
[3] Moret, *Gods and Kings of Egypt*, p. 139.

the idea of mercy as a human virtue of divine sanction; but the religious ideal of this people does not comprehend any spirit of active philanthropy; it is only of interest to note that in the recently discovered fragments of the philosopher, Kerkidas of Megalopolis, of the third century B. C., the new and strange personification Μετάδως appears, suggesting the idea of a spirit of self-sacrifice as a divine power.[1]

We know how deeply the character and the theology of a religion is affected according as it dwells with greater emphasis on the mercy of a compassionate or on the wrath of a just deity. Our orthodox Christology appears to hold the balance between both, though at different periods and according to the different temperaments of individual teachers, according also, we may say, as the spirit of the Old Testament or the New has dominated their minds, stress is laid on the one aspect or on the other, the darker for instance in Calvinism, the brighter in Christian Platonism.

Other religions besides our own have been vitally transformed by the preoccupation of the leaders of religious thought with the divine attribute of compassionateness. For it has engendered at times the appealing and momentous doctrine of the Saviour-God, either in the form of the descent of the God into the world of man or the ascent of the saviour-man. We can discern that the minds of the earliest Christians were troubled as between these two

[1] *Oxyr. Papyr.* 8, p. 31.

theories of Christ, until the ultimate decision was reached by the Church. The concept of the Saviour-God has been discovered also in Indian theology, in the later presentation in the Bhagavadgita of Krishna who 'at the call of human need "is born from age to age"'[1] . . . 'he serves men according as they approach him and the best of all ways by which he is approached is that of love'. In Hellenic religion the concept of the divine saviour tends rather to be embodied in the belief that a particular man of superhuman qualities attains at last to Godhead through his services to mankind; such were Herakles and Asklepios, who after their apotheosis remain essentially the saviours and helpers of men, the latter being specially marked out by the loving devotion of his worshippers as the compassionate God who felt for human weakness and who was 'a lover of the people'.[2] The title 'Saviour' is attached to him with special emphasis; it was attached occasionally to other deities, but only as a rule in reference to some special need such as salvation from the perils of battle or shipwreck.[3] It is only to Asklepios that it is attached, as to Christ, permanently and with intention to express his whole attitude to man. In the Messianic thought of pure Judaism there is no clear expression of the idea of the Saviour-God

[1] MacNicol, *Indian Theism*, pp. 80–1.

[2] Vide my former Gifford Lectures: *Greek Hero-Cults*, p. 277.

[3] It may be that the title in the cult of 'Kore Soteira' at Megalopolis bore the same allusion as it bears in our Christian vocabulary to salvation after death; *Cults*, 3, pp. 198–9.

descending or of a saviour man-God ascending; and it is entirely absent in Islam.

Finally, through dwelling on the divine attribute of compassionateness and religious thought has evolved the concept of a suffering God, in the unique sense of a God who suffers for mankind. In its undeveloped and unmoralized form it has become a commonplace of comparative religion and belongs to a low level of thought and ritual, the level at which the worshipper is apt to cause his Gods to suffer by beating, drowning, starving, or burning them. The idea only begins to be of significance for higher religion when it is embodied in the belief that a High God chooses suffering out of love of mankind, for the service or the redemption of the world or of the human race. There is no such interpretation possible of the legends of the sufferings of Asklepios, Herakles, Dionysos, or Osiris, though M. Moret would associate the death and pains of the Egyptian God with some of the ideas attaching to the Crucifixion.[1] But no hint is given of any ancient belief that Osiris died willingly or that his death was a benefit to mankind; although this might be said of his resurrection, since men obtained immortality for themselves by magical imitation of it. Perhaps it is only in the Saivite religion that began to spread over South India from the tenth century of our era that we find a parallel to the idea with which our own religion has familiarized us: Siva drinks deadly poison to deliver the Gods in a great

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 90.

world-crisis and his throat is blackened for ever by the draught; and his black throat is to his worshippers 'a constant reminder of his grace'; the Saivite text is here of value:

Thou mad'st me thine: didst fiery poison eat, pitying poor souls,
That I might ambrosia taste, I meanest one.[1]

Here is something closely akin to the Christian thought; but the legend is uncouth and inhuman as compared with the moving and human narrative of the Gospels. It is upon this that the momentous structure of our theology has been raised, of which the keystone is the concept of the Highest God deliberately choosing to suffer and die for mankind; and this willingness of self-sacrifice is proclaimed as the highest attribute of divinity by an eminent contemporary writer on the philosophy of religion.[2]

We discern here the triumph of anthropomorphism, and the most daring application of that 'pragmatic' principle of shaping our concept of God to suit our cravings and needs. We have discerned that principle in the evolution of certain forms of Greek religion; but nowhere has its operation issued in results of such transcendent importance as in our Christology. The idea of a suffering god was alien to the highest Greek thought on the divine nature in all periods of Greek speculation, most alien to the later Stoics, who would not even include compassionateness among the divine attributes; it was

[1] MacNicol, *op. cit.* p. 175.
[2] Dean Inge in *Plotinus*, 2, p. 232.

alien to the Judaic tradition and to Islam; it was a stumbling-block to many of the earlier Christian converts, and the great Arian and Doketist schisms provided a way of escape from it. In the vast literature of controversy that has raged around it, we discern that the final victory of the idea was due to two determinations of religious thought, the determination to maintain the divinity of Christ and to reconcile it with his life-drama, and on the other hand the determination to preserve the unity of the Godhead. But these speculative reasons have been fortified by the popular craving for a compassionate God, a craving which could be satisfied at last by the faith that God condescended to suffer as a man. At no period of its history has Christendom been wholly united in respect of this vital article; and the question is always taxing our deepest thought whether the idea inspiring this faith is reconcilable with philosophic concepts of an Absolute, Unchangeable, and Infinite God.

The moral attributes hitherto considered may be distinguished as functional and directly relative to human society. There are others that in the development of religion have come to be regarded as essential to the highest conception of Godhead, but fundamental in the divine nature considered in itself rather than in relation to ourselves or our social life. Primary among these are purity and holiness, spiritual ideas that at the same time concern ethical thought and feeling. These terms, which find their counterparts in the vocabularies of all the higher

religions, are closely related and shade off the one into the other, but are not wholly identical in respect of extent and content. The attribute of purity belongs equally to the human as to the divine sphere; it is as natural to speak of a pure human heart or a pure virgin as of a pure God. Holiness on the other hand even as vaguely expressed as by the Latin word 'sacer' or the Hebrew 'Qādōsh' is always related to the supernatural; for though we may speak of a holy man or a holy place, and though Jahwé might bid his people 'to be holy as he is holy', it is only because the man or the place stands in some close relation to the divinity, is touched or possessed with his power or presence that either could be called 'holy' or sacrosanct.

The distinction is delicate, but for those interested in the origins of our religious imagination of some importance. Purity is a possible quality or condition of the human body and soul, whence it has been transferred transcendentally to the character of high divinity; holiness is essentially a superhuman quality of the divine being, from whom it may descend and touch a mortal or an earthly place or thing. Our ethical conception of the deity has varied with the changes of our own mental history; but in all stages, wherever theistic belief has prevailed, holiness has belonged to the essence of the idea, though the influence of the consciousness of it on the mood of the individual worshipper or his society has varied greatly in intensity. In the presence of the supernatural, the mysterious and ineffable, the

natural response of the human consciousness is awe and dread: 'how dreadful is this place'; [1] 'woe is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.' [2] This emotion in its highest manifestation is far removed from ordinary fear; it is so even in its lower manifestations among primitive peoples, who may not have reached the stage of theistic belief but are specially susceptible to the dread of the 'sacred' or the 'tabu'. That which is holy is also dangerous, as the Philistines discovered to their cost, when they captured the Ark; holiness is a supernatural quality inherent in a person, a thing, or a place, withering and blasting the rash intruder or those who handle the thing or approach the presence without due preparation, such as spells, fasting, or purification; this is the savage and primitive view which strongly survives in advanced and higher religions, and dictates much of their precautionary ritual. It may be that we shall rise above it if we can achieve the highest refinement of religious feeling and accept as the highest utterance of religious psychology 'perfect love casteth out fear'. At least we have risen above the level of the writers of Leviticus and of Samuel, at which it was possible to believe that Jahwé withered the arm that was stretched out to save the ark and threatened Aaron with death if he entered the holy place unprepared.[3] We can moralize the attribute of holiness, which in its cruder aspects had nothing

[1] Gen. 28. 17. [2] Isa. 6. 5. [3] Lev. 16. 2.

to do with morality. But a recent writer on the psychology of religion is probably correct in maintaining that the sentiment of dread, elevated into solemn awe, is an inevitable part of the deeper religious consciousness. Its infusion in greater or less degree helps to differentiate religions, the Babylonian and Judaic for instance, where it was strongest, from the Greek, where it was weak. For while the boldness and freedom of the Greeks in their attitude towards their deities had the advantage of saving them from any hypocritical servility, the comparative weakness in them of the emotion of awe exposed their religious life to the touch of frivolity and the common-place.[1] Generally it is true that the spiritual emotion of awe is likely to be less intense in the polytheist than in the monotheist. Yet it is deeply impressed on the Babylonian liturgies; for the Babylonian worshipper, polytheist as he was, had the faculty of concentrating the whole of his soul on the particular deity whom he was addressing. Also we may observe that it varies inversely with the degree of vividness in the anthropomorphic imagination on the principle σεμνότητ' ἔχει σκότος: thus it is stronger in the Roman religion than in the Greek.

One strange phenomenon may be noted in this context; religious awe implies humility and the self-abasement of the mortal before the supramortal; it is therefore inconsistent with any belief that the

[1] This view appears justified on the whole in spite of such masterful expressions of religious thrill as in Soph. *Oed. Col.* 1649; *Antig.* 450–7; Eur. *Bacch.* 580–93.

deity is dependent on his worshipper's service or sacrifice; still more with the daring practice on the part of the worshipper of applying magical compulsion to his Gods. Yet so full of inconsistencies is the religious world that the belief of the deity's dependence on the sacrifice is found in such august religions as those of Vedic India and Babylonia; and the practice referred to, whereby the mortal asserts his superior power over the divinity, was prevalent in all periods of the Egyptian religion and was its salient infirmity. It is an outrage on the sense of divine holiness from which the Hellenic worship was happily free on the whole. Against the danger of its intrusion the highest religions have to be on the guard; for so deeply embedded in the religious soil are the roots of ancient magic that the magical thought of controlling or manipulating the divine power by an *opus operatum* can intrude itself under refined disguises, especially in the sphere of sacramental ritual. The Gnostic heresy was specially dangerous to Christianity from the prevalence in it of the conviction that by the magical use of mystic names and formulae the soul could secure its own salvation and, as it were, take the kingdom of heaven by force. A later parallel is found in the Sikh religion, in the belief that the utterance, even in blasphemy, of the sacred name Amitabha secures rebirth in paradise.[1]

The subject of purity as a divine attribute is more intricate and far more interwoven with the history

[1] Keith, *op. cit.* p. 299.

of many of our social institutions, both legal and ethical. Only the main salient points need be here adumbrated, especially as much recent anthropologic and theologic work has been published on the theme.[1] The phenomena concerned belong to the strangest chapter in the history of human psychology. In their origin they have nothing to do with theistic worship, and even in a later stage are more concerned with demons than with gods. They reflect the primeval instincts of our race, its shuddering aversions from certain natural objects, animals, states of the body, especially blood, dirt, death, childbirth, evil smells. As the emotion is deep and aboriginal, reason and reflection have played little part in the system of rules that it has evolved. Every people has had such a system, and its progress has sometimes been helped and sometimes hindered by its greater or lesser degree of bondage to it. The code of purity and the distinction between pure and impure things and states only begin to be of religious importance when they are imputed to the divinity and regarded as of divine origin. Historically such imputation is always a delusion, for the code did not arise from religion, and its origin is the concern of primitive anthropology. But it was inevitable that such imputation should be made, and that when the faith in High Gods was established, what was impure in the sight of men should be regarded as impure in the eyes of God. For impure things and states,

[1] For references and fuller discussion, vide my *Evolution of Religion*, 'The Ritual of Purification', pp. 88–162.

especially blood, death, childbirth, evil smells and evil food, came to be linked with a demonology, with a belief that they expose us to the assaults of evil spirits; the High Gods are our protectors against evil spirits and are petitioned to guard us from the effects of impurity. Hence there could arise in the human imagination the suggestion or intuition of the high deities as the source of all purity and finally of God as a being ineffably pure. Other circumstances could contribute at certain times and among certain peoples to strengthen and build up this concept. The sun's warmth and the light of the sky are the chief natural phenomena regarded as essentially pure and purifying; on the other hand night and darkness are closely associated with the impure spirits that vanish at the dawning of day, as the Babylonian exorcisms amply attest. And the imagination that shaped the religions of the ancient culture borrowed much from the sun and the light of the sky, and these cosmic forces irradiated the imagined personality of God; so that even the religions that rose above nature-worship, the Zarathustrian and the Moslem, could use light as the nearest analogue for the divine substance,[1] and it enters as a powerfully-working metaphor into Christian phraseology. And light, radiance, and purity are cognate ideas.

It is interesting to trace in the history of religions the manifold results of this sanctification by religion of the various codes of purity and purification, a

[1] 'The body of Ahura is like the light.' Porph. *Vit. Pyth.* 41; *Qur'an*, 24. 35, 'God is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth'.

subject that has never been completely handled and is far beyond our present scope. We owe to them certain elementary rules safeguarding the decency and decorum of temple-worship found among all peoples of lower and higher culture; as that the temples must not be polluted with blood, dirt, child-birth, sex-intercourse except as part of a religious ritual, quarrelling, blasphemy. Such rules, like those concerning pure and impure food, concern physical purity rather than moral. But the character of a deity is apt to be coloured differently according to the greater or lesser degree of severity in the application of these rules. The divine character may be narrowed and chilled by an over-great insistence on the rule of physical purity. In Greek polytheism, for example, Apollo is *par excellence* the 'pure' God and the God who purifies; so sensitive is he imagined to any stain, that no taint of death must ever come near him, the dying must be hurriedly removed from the sacred island of Delos, and he is sometimes regarded as standing unsympathetically aloof from the sorrowful life of men: he is only with them in their gladness and their triumph, and as Aeschylus says of him, 'he is not one to stand by us in our lamentations'.[1] There is much beauty in the cool virginity of Artemis; in the drama of Euripides on the fate of Hippolytus, she comes to comfort him, her beloved votary, in the hour of death, but hastily leaves him lest his death pollute her; and there is a pathetic bitterness in his beautiful last words

[1] *Ag.* 1079.

addressed to her 'Lightly thou dost abandon a life-long fellowship'. Divine purity, then, may be repellent and unloving. It is still more serious that the burdensome and meticulous codes of purity that disfigure spiritual systems, such as the later Mazdeism and Judaism, and set a heavy clog on the conscience and progress of these peoples, should be given forth as the authoritative utterances of Ahura or Jahwé: the character of the High God thus being tainted with the petty punctiliousness of sacerdotalism. Hellenic polytheism was at least favoured by comparative freedom from such bondage, so that it could take its cathartic code more lightly and use it for progressive purposes in law and ethics. The theory of ritualistic purity is in itself non-moral, and does not necessarily foster a higher human morality or a higher moral characterization of the divine nature. For instance, Apollo's purity is merely ritualistic and connected with temple-ceremoniousness; the bloodstained murderer brings impurity into his sanctuary; on his altar, called 'the pure', at Delos no blood-sacrifice must be offered: yet he has no concern with sexual morality in itself, and impure myths were current about him. The theory rests on deep, primeval emotions of a physical origin, and being independent of logical reasoning is rarely worked out into logical conclusions concerning the origin of the created world; it clashes hopelessly, though in Judaism and other advanced creeds it might be long before the clash was felt, with any consistent theory about the divine

and beneficent creation of the world, such as is presented in Genesis; for as the High God pronounced that everything that he made was very good it was difficult to reconcile this with the feeling that both the method of generation necessary to all organic life and certain created beings were intrinsically noisome and impure; and the contradiction is not wholly dispelled by the higher message sent to St. Peter: 'what God hath cleansed, that call thou not common.' In fact the theory, when brought to the test of explaining the cosmos, is only consistent with a pessimistic dogma either that all matter is impure and not the creation of a pure God or that a part at least of it is impure and the work of an evil power. To the former doctrine there appears an approximation in some of the Gnostics, and in some passages of the Neoplatonists; and Porphyry quotes with approval an aphorism that he attributes to Apollonios of Tyana: 'there is nothing material that is not intrinsically impure in relation to the immaterial.'[1] The other and less extreme alternative was adopted by the later Mazdeism, which having inherited a high religious tradition perverted it and built up an elaborate cosmic code of dualism, dividing the whole created world of animals, plants, and inanimate things into two classes good and evil, each the creation of a good and of an evil deity. We are not now concerned with the philosophic difficulties of this dualistic creed, which in its remote affiliations spilt much blood in Europe. It at least

[1] *De Abstin*, 2. 34; cf. Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 2, p. 150 c.

secured, what Judaism failed to secure, consistence between its religion and its oppressive cathartic system.

More pregnant of possibilities of religious progress is the doctrine attested of the religion of the Sikhs that there is nothing at all in the created world that is intrinsically impure.[1] Equally liberative and daring was the view suggested once by Sophocles [2] and once by Euripides [3] that nothing which mortals or the creatures of this earth could do could possibly pollute the divine powers; as though their height was so transcendent, their purity so secure, that no miasma from this world could sully it. This thought is above the level of any popular religion, and it is probable that no religion is wholly free from some ritual of purification that reflects however dimly the ancient emotion. Only it is always possible to quicken dead ritual with a new intention; as we see in the church-service of the churching of women, which was suggested by the primitive feeling of the impurity of childbirth, but has been transformed into an act of thanksgiving.

But the human and divine attribute that we are discussing only begins to be of vital concern for higher religion when the idea of purity has taken on a moral or spiritual sense as purity from moral stain, and when sin is regarded as the only real or chief source of impurity. This momentous transition from the physical to the spiritual sphere was made

[1] Macauliffe, *Sikh Relig.* 1, p. 242.

[2] *Antig.* 1043.

[3] *Her. Main.* 1232.

possible even for the primitive mind by its aptness to discover a mysterious association between sin and dirt ;[1] and it was achieved by all the religions of ancient culture that have left us full record of themselves. We are familiar with the exaltation of the idea in the prophetic books of the Old Testament and in the Gospels ; and texts of the same high level can be quoted from Babylonian and Hellenic religious literature ; for instance a Babylonian text from Sippar, ' In the sight of thy God thou shalt be pure of heart, for that is the distinction of the Godhead ; '[2] and in Greek poetry and philosophy we find such high utterances as ' if thou art pure of soul, thou art pure of all thy body ' ;[3] and the Delphic oracle was credited with pronouncements of much spiritual refinement on this theme—' Oh stranger, if holy of soul, enter the shrine of the holy God, having but touched the lustral water: lustration is an easy matter for the good, but all ocean with its streams cannot cleanse the evil man ' ;[4] and ' the temples of the Gods are open to all good men, nor is there any need for purification : no stain can ever cleave to virtue. But depart, whosoever is evil at heart, for thy soul will never be cleansed by the washing of thy body '[5]. And that these were not merely the views of the higher-minded *élite* is somewhat attested by the fact that in the precincts of the temple of Asklepios at

[1] Vide my *Evolution of Religion*, p. 112, n. 1.
[2] Jeremias, *Die Cultus-Tafel von Sippar*, p. 29.
[3] Epicharmos in Clem. Alex. *Strom.* p. 844.
[4] *Anth. Pal.* 14. 71. [5] *Ib.*, 14. 74.

Epidauros was inscribed the text 'within the sanctuary one must be pure, and purity is to have righteous thoughts'.[1]

It is evident that if this exalted conception of purity, familiar to early Christianity and the best Pagan thought, had been worked out to its logical consequences, the civilized religions generally might have been delivered, as we ourselves are for the most part, from the burden of cathartic ritual: but ritual is most enduring, for it is often a bond of racial unity, and it is the interest of the sacerdotal class to conserve it; therefore Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism are still in bondage.

But though this exaltation of the concept has not effected a general deliverance, its influence on the moral and religious consciousness has been great. Its potency reaches its maximum under the belief to which St. Paul gives expression,[2] namely that the human body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and that therefore any foul thought or word or act is sacrilege against the sanctuary. And this thought is not exclusively Christian, for Epictetus expresses it in the dictum: 'Thou bearest God about with thee within thyself; and thou dost not realize that thou art outraging him with thy impure thoughts and unclean deeds.'[3] As in this ideal view all sin may come to be regarded as defilement, purity may stand as the full equivalent of sinlessness. Yet it is not an ideal that naturally embraces the whole moral

[1] Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, 6

[2] 1 Cor. 6. 19.

[3] *Diss.* 2. 8. 11.

code, for both in its ritualistic and spiritual significance, it has primarily a negative connotation, the freedom from stain ; it may preserve us ' unspotted from the world ' but it does not directly prompt to active benevolence and social service. In respect of our attitude towards our fellows, there is in it an aloofness, a self-reference, and therefore it is ethically inferior to the ideals of charity and love : therefore, also, in the scale of divine attributes, it ranks below the attributes of mercy and loving-kindness. But in the evolution of our highest conception of divine personality, it has helped to exorcise the lower anthropomorphism which among so many peoples has attributed sexual passion to the deity, and it has thus strengthened the religious emotion of awe and the sense of holiness.

There are also certain special phenomena in the history both of creeds and of human society that may be ascribed to its influence. That all sex-intercourse is intrinsically impure is a widespread feeling among primitive peoples, and this has evoked certain ritualistic rules of serious import for the history of even advanced religions, such as the demand for celibacy and chastity in priests and priestesses, either lifelong or at certain periods, and the belief that only a virgin could be the organ of prophecy. We can give no general explanation why some cults of the ancient polytheism imposed this rule on their ministrants, while others did not. Strictly Protestant Christianity, obeying the Judaic tradition, and perhaps influenced unconsciously by old religious tradition of

the north, has favoured a married priesthood; on the other hand the Catholic rule of celibacy was determined on after long controversy in the early Church under Mediterranean influences. It may be that the growing exaltation of the Virgin Mary contributed much to the enforcement of the ascetic rule. For it might be supposed that a Virgin-Goddess would demand virginity in her ministers, though where such cults were prominent this is by no means a universal custom. Where it prevails it does not necessarily carry with it the corollary that virginity is generally for each individual a more blessed state than the sex-life. Nor can we explain the prevalence in the pre-Christian communities of the Mediterranean of the cults of virgin goddesses as inspired by the belief that this was an essentially characteristic attribute of the supreme goddess; for most of such goddesses were worshipped at times not only as 'Maid' but as 'Mother', without clear recognition of any contradiction. Nor am I aware of any utterance in pre-Christian literature of the Mediterranean area that exalts virginity as a more blessed state for humanity as bringing it nearer to the divine life, except certain doubtful expressions of the early Pythagorean asceticism. The drama of Euripides called 'Hippolytos' appears in passages to eulogize the ascetic and virginal character of the young votary of the maiden-goddess Artemis and his aversion to the married state: but though the poet may have been aware of such temperaments, he uses the motive for dramatic purposes only and

builds no theory of life upon it. The aversion to marriage, a degenerate sign in the later social world of Greece, certainly did not arise from any ideal of purity; and the later Cynic philosophy which paraded that aversion tolerated gross sex-indulgence at times. Buddhistic asceticism springs from no religious dogma but merely from a pessimistic view of matter and of the fleshly existence; and that of the older Brahminical discipline was only a privilege reserved for the 'twice-born' and the higher caste. The healthy-minded pronouncement of Zarathustrian ethics that 'the man who has a wife is far above him who lives in continence'[1] agrees with what was on the whole the Judaic view.

The idea of the total renunciation of the sex-life began to be of importance for religion and ethics near the beginning of our era. The much-debated accounts that have come to us from Philo and Josephus of the mysterious sect of the Essenes, a probably Judaic community in the vicinity of the Red Sea, imply their disapproval of any intercourse between the sexes; but these accounts are not wholly consistent; and we cannot believe that the doctrine of the Essenes affected the growth of Christian sentiment in this respect. But it much concerns the history of our own religion to consider whether we can find germs of the anti-sexual feeling in the New Testament. No one could reasonably maintain that the exaltation of virginity was part of the original teaching of Christ; most of the

[1] Fargard, 4, iii *b*, *Sacred Books of the East*, 4, p. 46.

Apostles appear to have been married, and in none of the Apostolic writings is there any clear hints of the idea, save in the well-known passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians who attaches to his advice on marriage the unfortunate expression 'I would that all men were even as I myself',[1] that is to say, 'unmarried'. We may suppose that he added these words not as a practical injunction but as a wish or a preference in view of the troubles of the time, and in the belief of the near approach of the end of this world. But they had momentous consequences for later Christendom. And we can understand that St. Paul's theory of the impurity of the flesh might be wrested, though he did not so wrest it himself, to a radical condemnation of flesh-life and flesh-generation. Finally we have the fact, for which nothing else in the New Testament prepares us, that in the Johannine Apocalypse virgins are invested with a special glory and distinction in the kingdom of Heaven.

But, apart from any definite teaching in the New Testament on this matter, we have evidence from St. Paul's statements concerning the virgins maintained by his Corinthian converts that some of the early Gentile Christians were beginning to try experiments in sex-abstinence. Further, we have testimony that some of the earlier Gnostic sects, whose heresies were partly dangerous to real Christianity, partly in the end favourable to the establishment of some compromising form of it, were fanatical on

[1] 1st Ep. 7. 7.

this matter: in the Gnostic Gospel of St. Philip the soul after death makes her claim before the tribunal of the High Powers on the assertion 'I have not begotten children for the Archon',[1] the Archon being the lower ruler of our evil world, wherein to beget children is to continue the evil; and Hippolytus attributes the view to the Gnostic founder Saturninus that 'marriage and the begetting of children are from Satan'.[2] This anti-social pessimism is the natural corollary of the dualism inherent in Gnosticism and their uncompromising dogma concerning the evil of matter. Whether from Gnosticism or Neoplatonism or purely social causes the spirit of ascetism came to be powerful in the early Christian Church, evoking the dogma of the superiority of the celibate life, of which among the early fathers Origen was the prominent champion.[3] Then arose the singular and momentous movement towards monasticism, which having gained strength in Egypt spread itself throughout central Europe and has not yet wholly spent itself. It was accompanied by the exaltation of virginity, which finds its expression in medieval effusions, *De laudibus Virginitatis*, often of morbid extravagance. Doubtless this phenomenon, anti-social as from its main effects we must pronounce it—this 'flight from the world'—was powerfully influenced by the prevailing social conditions of violence

[1] Epiphanius, *Haeres*, 26. 13, p. 190 (Oehler).

[2] vii. c. 28.

[3] *c. Cels.* 1. 26; 7. 48; 8. 55; other references in Hastings, *E. R. E.* vol. 2, p. 75.

and wickedness. But we must reckon with the religious factor also, the imagination brooding on the stainless purity of God and especially of the Divine Mother and the sharp contrast between the sense of this and the long-inherited feeling of the intrinsic impurity of sex-life. Also, apart from this religious factor, we may suppose that the influence of the spiritual Neoplatonic theory of the world was one of the forces beneath the surface making for the monastic ideal. For Porphyry, in his letter to Marcellinus, influenced not by any appeal from the cult of virgin-goddesses but by his Neoplatonic theory of the illusion and corruption of matter, is as extravagant in his appreciation of the value of virginity as any medieval monk.

We have here then an interesting example of a divine attribute, suggested originally by human emotion, working on the evolution of a social growth of great moment in the history of the European communities. It has worked no less momentously in the religious sphere in favour of the early acceptance of the orthodox dogma of the Incarnation, the virgin-birth of our Lord, and the dogma proclaimed by later Catholicism of the Immaculate Conception.

But it is not enough to say that the consciousness of the purity of the Godhead and of the intrinsic impurity of the ordinary process of birth could alone have evoked these beliefs. It was inevitable that to explain the incarnation of the Godhead in humanity, the descent of the Logos into our world,

miraculous operation should be demanded. A different miraculous operation might have been imagined, such as we find in Gnostic mythology, dispensing altogether with the human mother ; but this would have seriously impaired the essential Christian belief in the reality of Christ's humanity and would have clashed with the historical remembered fact. And it was equally necessary to protect the belief in the divine paternity from any pagan grossness of realism ; therefore the miracle of the virgin-birth was the natural solution ; and even this did not wholly satisfy the hyper-purism of some later Christian imagination, which represented the divine infant emerging as a ray of light from the side of the virgin.

Beneath all this we still can recognize the influence of the immemorial feeling of the impurity of the processes of birth and their offensiveness to the purity of the deity, a feeling never reconcilable with any coherent theory of the divine creation of the world of matter. In proportion as we escape from that feeling the belief in the virgin-birth loses its emotional force. We can then imagine the Incarnation as coming to pass otherwise without any offence to our sensitiveness.

The discussion has handled sufficiently, perhaps, for the present purpose the more important moral attributes attached to the divinity. Some general reflections now suggest themselves. There is no need to enlarge on the vital and far-reaching influence on human morality of the belief that our ethics are of

divine origin, or at least are in harmony with the divine character. That

> Man's justice from the all-just Gods was given,
> A Light that from some upper fount did beam,
> Some better archetype whose seat was Heaven,

that 'earthly power doth then show likest God's when mercy seasons justice' are beliefs that for many ages have inspired, tempered, and restrained the actions and wills of men: of this the record of human society in sacred and secular literature gives ample testimony. We have also noted how strong is the tendency in ancient and also in primitive societies to invest the whole body of social institutions, custom, and moral laws, with the halo of divine sanction. Moreover, much emphasis has been laid by modern anthropology [1] on the powerful formative influence of religion in shaping both the moral and the legal code, and all this has been supposed to justify two pronouncements of the highest practical and theoretical importance; first, that religion was the source and formative cause of all morality; secondly, that religion, in the clear sense of belief in a personal moral deity, gives the only sure basis and ultimate validity to the moral life; and a natural corollary of this second judgement is that morality will be imperilled if such a belief disappears. The two pronouncements need not be mutually interdependent, at least for those who deny that origin affects validity. But each must be examined on its merits.

[1] Vide specially Frazer's *Psyche's Task*.

It is obvious that to sanction anything is not the same as to originate it: therefore the observed fact that in ancient society, and to some extent in modern, religion sanctions law and morality, is no proof that herein lay their origin. To discover the origin of each special institution or item in the code is a matter of arduous historical and anthropological study. An easy and salient example is the moral law against perjury, a sin which excites more moral reprobation than ordinary lying. The Greek conscience was as sensitive in this matter as the Hebraic, and the third commandment appealed to all the cultured races of antiquity. The moral law rested directly on the old religious feeling that prompted it, namely that to swear in the name of the divinity was to put oneself into direct and dangerous *rapport* with him, the oath being often strengthened by actual contact with some sacred object as by kissing the book in a modern law-court; therefore perjury was a personal insult to the dignity of the divinity which he was certain to avenge. Now that the religious sentiment is weakened, perjury is scandalously common in our courts, far more common than it probably was in the old Mediterranean societies where the standard of general truthfulness was much lower. Here then is special evidence in favour of the two pronouncements mentioned above. On the other hand, we cannot discover a religious origin for the ordinary virtue of truthfulness, which is still slightly more prevalent in some of the North-European peoples than in the Mediterranean area, and which is probably to be connected with the northern tradition

of honour and courage: it was scarcely sanctified in the religion of the peoples of ancient culture, save in a special sense in the Persian. It is also to be observed that a large and important part of our moral code rests on the altruistic feelings of love and kindliness inspired by the sense of kinship; and the sense of duty to parents, to children, to kinsmen, and neighbours cannot be traced back to a definite religious origin, though all the more advanced religions have sanctioned the code of conduct resulting. The sense itself rests on the primeval family-love that is older than any proved belief in personal deities, and which we share with the higher animals; and the same feeling in a feebler degree prevails between members of the same primitive group or tribe. In fact we may find primitive tribes without any clear belief in personal deities; but we find none without morality.

We cannot then unhesitatingly accept the second pronouncement that morality cannot maintain itself without theistic faith; still less the more partisan assertion, sometimes proclaimed in support of a tottering religion, that the abandonment of a particular creed means the extinction of all morality. This is the short-sighted prejudice that impelled some of the early Christian fathers to deny any ethical value to the virtues of the most virtuous pagans; for among the tragedies of our Christian history was the growth of the illusion that orthodoxy was the crown of all virtues which alone could give validity to all the others. In basing morality wholly on religion, Christianity agrees with Judaism and

Moslemism, and is differentiated from some of the other religious and ethical constructions of the old world. As regards early Indian thought as expressed in the *Rigveda* and the Buddhistic teaching, the moral order was not the creation of any god. Greek religion made no clear pronouncement; but Greek ethical speculation was mainly secular; and though Plato's was tinged with religion, we may feel that when the Christian Platonists of Cambridge declared that a moral God was the only source of the absolute validity of the moral Law they were speaking as Christians rather than as Platonists. The opposition between the two views as to the source of moral validity, the secular and the religious, may be most strongly presented by contrasting Aristotelian ethics with the theories of the medieval disciples of Occam: the Aristotelian system is secular almost throughout, based on a subtle analysis of human society and the human soul; the practically wise and good man gives the standard for the moral judgement, and it is valid because it is intrinsically reasonable; but for the Occamist it was only valid because God pronounced it, and his paradox, though quaint, is logical that, if God had ordered us to hate him, it would be our moral duty to hate God.[1]

The secular and the religious points of view are combined by maintaining that the moral judgement

[1] A touch of the same casuistry appears in Aeschylus' tragedy of the Choephoroi: 'is matricide ever justifiable? Yes, if the gods order it.' The answer did not altogether satisfy Greek ethical sentiment.

is valid because it is reasonable, and being reasonable it is also God's injunction. Only, then, we must allow that its validity would remain even if belief in its divine origin disappeared.

Or it may be that the surest method for harmonizing the secular and the religious aspect of morality is to maintain that the power of pronouncing a moral judgement comes to us from the intuitive perception of moral values, the perception that something is morally good and must therefore be done or chosen, and that this is a value-judgement belonging, like the value-judgements on beauty and truth, to the spiritual order; and that the spiritual order is permeated with the power and essence of God. This is a stronger position than that of those who would have us believe that God has dictated to us any special code. For history may reply to them that it is rather we who have dictated our varying codes to God, and made many mistakes in our dictation.

# VIII

## THE ATTRIBUTES OF BEAUTY, WISDOM, AND TRUTH

The attributes of divinity that may be called aesthetic and intellectual have been far less prominent in the leading religions of the world than those which were the subject of the preceding chapter: perhaps for the reason expressed in Matthew Arnold's easy aphorism 'conduct is three-fourths of life'. This arithmetic may not be exact; but we are aware that morality does not exhaust the whole connotation of life or of God: there is a residue in both that is of vital interest.

We may first consider the relation between the idea of Beauty and the idea of divinity. The first and naïve question whether God is to be imagined as beautiful would be turned aside as irrelevant by the more advanced religions, and is only answered simply and strongly in the affirmative by the most anthropomorphic, namely the Greek. The perception of the divine personality as the transcendent embodiment of human beauty was at once the crowning achievement and the limitation of Greek religion; and we are only beginning to realize what such imagination meant for the art of the world. But the attribute of beauty had not much value for the Jewish religious imagination—and we are not

sure what the Psalmist exactly meant when he exclaimed 'Out of Zion hath God appeared in perfect beauty'. There is no prominence of the idea of beauty as a divine attribute in Egyptian religion, except in the worship of the material divine sun; nor so far as I am aware in Moslemism,[1] nor in Mesopotamian or Vedic polytheisms.[2] The association of the idea of beauty with the religious sphere, encouraged by the strong anthropomorphism of the Hellenes and by their unique artistic faculty and enthusiasm, was a distinctive feature of Greek philosophy, and especially the Platonic and Neoplatonic, reappearing at a later period in the religious theory of the Cambridge Platonists.[3] When Plotinus uses the beauty of flowers as a proof of God's providence operating in the world,[4] when St. Augustine asserts that God is beautiful, that is to say, is the spiritual soul of beauty in created things, because

[1] It does not appear in the long list of divine attributes given in the Koran (Palmer, pp. lxvii–lxviii).

[2] Prof. Macdonell refers to a text in the *Rigveda* (*op. cit.* p. 40), in which Vishnu is invoked to endow an unborn child with his own beautiful form. The Asvins are described in one or two passages as beautiful (*ib.* p. 49), but on the whole the Vedic deities are characterized by their power rather than their beauty.

[3] Cf. *Cambr. Platon.* (Campagnac, p. 174): 'God is also that unstained Beauty and supreme Good which our wills are perpetually catching after: and wheresoever we find true Beauty, Love and Goodness, we may say, Here or there is God.'

[4] Aug. *De Civ. Dei*, 10. 14: Plotinus' treatment of καλλόνη and τὸ καλόν in relation to the highest reality shows the Greek aesthetic spirit, but some hazy and contradictory thinking; vide Inge, *Plotinus*, 2, p. 123.

the visible heavens and earth are beautiful,[1] they are in accord with the experience not uncommon at the present day that deep perception of beauty in the world is one vehicle of communion with the divine spirit.

The overmastering impressionableness of the Greek temperament to beauty suggested to Greek philosophy the conviction that beauty was a part of a higher reality ; it also produced phenomena in the polytheism that can scarcely be paralleled in other religions ; for the powerful enthusiasm of the poet and the craftsmen seemed to come from a superhuman source, and projected on the divine world such forms as the Muses and Mnemosyne which became living figures in popular cult. There arise divine patrons of the arts ; the poet could be termed a θεῖος ἀνήρ, a divinely-inspired man ; the invocation of the Muses, a pedantic convention of our later classicists, might have been a real source of psychic energy for the early Greek. The mystic feeling that poetic or artistic achievement was an inspiration of some higher power, other than oneself, can be paralleled from other peoples and other times. One may quote a strange passage from the Epic poetry of Scandinavia, the grandiloquent phrase of a Skald who calls his song ' the storm of the mind of Odin,' as if Odin's spirit swept tempestuously over his strings. Some interesting modern examples are given by Dean Inge in his recent Gifford Lectures on Plotinus ;[2]

[1] *Confessions*, Bk. XI, 4.

[2] 2, pp. 155–157.

such as the well-known lines of Wordsworth on the poet's vision :

> In such access of mind, in such high hours
> Of visitation from the living God,
> Thought was not : in enjoyment it expired—

and the strange experience of Mozart attesting how his symphonies at certain happy times came into his imagination as a whole, all at once ' and this is perhaps the best gift I have my divine Master to thank for '. We may also glean a few examples from other religions than the Greek of the attribution of art-patronage to special divinities : the great Babylonian god Nebo was specially the patron of scribes and artists ;[1] in Hinduism Ganesh, the elephant-god, is supposed to preside over literature ; and the striking phrase quoted above from Norse poetry seems to correspond to real Scandinavian belief, for another well-known Skald, Egil, declares that Odin ' has given me recompense for my woes ; he gave me an art (that of poetry) free from fault and stain '.[2] But none of these divine personages are real parallels to the Greek Muses, for they did not originate like the latter as projections of the psychic energy of the art-impulse, but were pre-established figures in their respective Pantheons who happened to acquire this special interest. In fact, the only example that I have been able to find that appears to offer a close parallel is given in a report on the religion of the Haidas, the savage inhabitants

[1] Jastrow, *Die Religion Babyloniens und Assyriens*, 1, p. 238.
[2] Craigie, *Religion of Ancient Scandinavia*, p. 20.

of Queen Charlotte Island, who are said to worship two divine sisters called 'The Singers' who taught men the gift of song.[1]

In the end a searching comparison of all the higher religions convinces us that none has stood in so close and so stimulating a relation to the human art-faculty as the Hellenic stood; in particular we can discern how the worship of Apollo aided the development of European music.[2] Also we owe it to the aesthetic-religious trend of Greek philosophy that the idea of Beauty has been raised by Christian mystics to the divine sphere, and has irradiated the austerer Judaic conception of a purely moral God.

We have next to consider the attributes of Wisdom and Truth. In ranking *Sapientia* or Wisdom among the three essential attributes of divinity the schoolmen were in accord with the popular belief as expressed in most of the higher religions. Even in the lower stages of culture the worshipper imputes to his deity or to the superhuman order of spirits a higher knowledge and a higher wisdom in the practical sense than he himself possesses; for he consults these beings as to the future and believes himself to be inspired by them in dreams on doubtful and hidden matters that they know and which he cannot discover by himself. Passing from the cruder stage, religious thinking comes to impute to the divinity the power of knowing all the hidden things of the

[1] Swanton in *Smithsonian Inst. Bur. of Amer. Ethnol.* 1905, p. 448 (vide *Arch. f. Relig. Wissensch.* 1911, pp. 224–5).

[2] For a discussion of this topic vide *Cults*, 4, pp. 243–52.

world, even of knowing the hidden thoughts and emotions of man's heart, an advanced belief of great import for morality. But it may be long before a clear conception of omniscience is reached as an essential faculty and attribute of high divinity. In some of the polytheisms of the cultured peoples, we by no means find omniscience or even a high degree of wisdom attributed to each deity alike; on the contrary we find a single deity or a few specializing in wisdom. In old Egyptian religion the god Ptah is described as 'the intelligence and tongue of the Gods, the source of the thoughts of every God, of every man, of every animal'.[1] In the Babylonian it is the God Ea who is *par excellence* the God of Wisdom, though he shares this function with Nebo. In the Hellenic, Zeus, Athena, and Apollo are pre-eminent as the deities of wisdom both practical and theoretical; as early as the Homeric period some kind of omniscience was claimed for Zeus, and later the same claim is made for Apollo by the Delphic oracle and by Pindar. We may regard it in fact as inevitable that whenever religious thinking had advanced to the belief in a divine government of the world of nature and the world of man, divine wisdom would come to be conceived as omniscient, though the concept might be hindered and clouded in the polytheisms; and it is not one that the sacred texts of the monotheistic religions tend to emphasize. There is emphasis laid on it as an attribute of Ahura

[1] Moret, *Kings and Gods of Egypt*, p. 64, quoting from Breasted, *Ägyptische Zeitschrift*, 39, p. 39.

in the later Mazdean texts as on the ignorance of the evil god;[1] the second part of the name of the Highest, Ahura Mazdāh, marks his Wisdom; and in the Mazdean list of divine names specially prepared for repetition by the faithful many of intellectual significance occur, such as 'the knower', 'the Far-seeing', 'Of best insight'.[2] In the prophetic books of the Old Testament and in passages in the Psalms the omniscience of Jahwé is clearly revealed or implied and most forcibly presented in the book of Job. In our own liturgy God is 'the power to whom all hearts are open and no secret is hid', 'who knows our necessities before we ask'; and in a verse in the *Qur'an* Mahomet dwells on this super-knowledge of the High God, 'With him are the keys of the unseen. None knows them save He: He knows what is in the land and in the sea; and there falls not a leaf save that he knows it.'[3]

With Wisdom Truth is essentially linked in the ideal both of human character and the divine; we may distinguish the one from the other by regarding Wisdom as a power of the mind, Truth as an active accord of the mind with the highest realities of the spiritual and physical world, involving the hostile determination of the will against falsehood and deceit. But in the use of these terms in the religious literature of the world ambiguity may arise, for each of them has an intellectual, a moral, and a religious

[1] Moulton, *Early Zoroastrianism*, p. 291.
[2] *Id.*, *The Treasure of the Magi*, p. 95.
[3] Palmer, *The Koran*, p. 121 (6. 55–9).

aspect; and we observe that the ideal presented by a higher religion may be differently coloured according as stress is laid upon one or the other of these different aspects; we may be hereby prompted to different views of the conduct of life. Familiarity with various sacred texts will soon convince the reader that wisdom for the writers of the Old Testament and the Apocrypha meant something different from what 'Sophia' meant for the Greeks; and Truth for the Mazdean meant something different from what it signifies for the modern scientist. The sacred books of Judaism appraise and exalt Wisdom, whether as a Divine attribute or the most blessed gift to men, only in the moral-religious sense, the power of ordering life in accordance with the law of righteousness and of rightly understanding the ways of the Most High: no reverence is paid to secular human knowledge for its own sake;[1] in fact in the third chapter of Genesis there is a glimmering of the barbaric idea that knowledge is evil. The same may be said of the 'wisdom' in the Zarathustrian Gathas and in the later Mazdean texts: Truth is preached in this religion as a great moral ideal: Ahura the God of Right is also the God of Truth,[2] just as the evil demon or god stands for falsehood (Drug); and the sacred texts accord with the statement in Herodotus that truth was the moral virtue specially

[1] Vide the panegyric on Truth in I Esdras 4. 34–41.

[2] Cf. Porphyry, *Vit. Pyth.* 41: 'the God whom they call Oromazes they say is like to the light in respect of his body and to Truth in respect to his soul.'

inculcated in the Persian youth. But neither in Mazdeism nor in Judaism nor in orthodox Islam do we find any expression of the belief that God inspires or favours the devotion of the human intellect to pure science or high philosophy. The religious trend of these three great peoples was innately hostile or indifferent to such pursuits. The pious Mazdean preferred sacred spells to medical science for the healing of the sick;[1] and when intellectual light came to penetrate Judaism and Islam, it was light from an alien source, not from Jahwé or Allah, but from Hellas.

The outburst and marvellous development of science and philosophy from the sixth century onwards in Hellas is primarily due to the intellectual genius of the race and their enthusiastic devotion to the things of the mind. As has been well said, the Hellene was the first man who endeavoured to make himself at home in the world; and for that purpose he was incited to study it as it was. And in this he was actually assisted or at least not hindered—as for long centuries Christendom was hindered—by religion. And what have been considered drawbacks and limitations in his religion, the absence of Sacred Books whose pronouncements on the physical universe or the solar system might have to be accepted as authoritative against the discoveries of true science, the absence in fact of any religious dogma concerning creation and the nature of things or the origin and destiny of man which faith was constrained

[1] Vide *Sacred Books*, vol. 4, p. 87; my *Evolution of Religion*, p. 132.

to accept, these were positive advantages for the freedom of thought and speculation. Of course, Greek religion did not originate science or philosophy, but it was powerless to hinder their growth and it became wise enough to encourage it: the Delphic oracle, for instance, was caught by the intellectual enthusiasm and was credited with kindly and wi. encouragement to thinkers and students, notably to Socrates';[1] and as I pointed out in a former series of these lectures the temples of Asklepios, though . dabbled in the miraculous, became the nursing-ground of modern medicine.[2] What is more important is that the devotion of the thinker and the inquire could rise in gifted individuals of this race to such a pitch that it could seem an inspiration from a higher source and could be imputed to God. And this affected their theory of the ideals of human life and their view of the divine character and attributes. Whereas for the Hebrew the personality of God is mainly a moral power, by Plato and Aristotle and the succeeding schools it tends to be expressed in intellectual terms; so that God could be defined as the supreme 'Nous' or Mind of the Universe, as Apollo was explained by Empedokles as the 'Holy Thought' of the world.[3]

An important 'pragmatic' result of this view is that the philosopher and the philosophic life is the

[1] Vide *Cults*, 4, pp. 242–3.

[2] *Greek Hero-Cults*, pp. 265–75.

[3] The same aspect of God is presented in Neo-Platonism, e. g. Procl. in *Tim.* 22 D.

personality and the life nearest and dearest to God; this valuation is familiar to the reader of Plato; and Aristotle is his true disciple in placing the life of theoretic contemplation above the moral and practical as bringing men nearer to the divine ideal. We may compare certain utterances of the Pythagorean school, as that it is by keeping in accord with Truth that we come closest to God;[1] and that the wise man alone is holy and beloved by God.[2] This religious consecration of science, philosophy, and the pursuit of knowledge must have stimulated the intellectual ardour of the few; and even the man of the people could be persuaded that the activity of the philosopher and 'savant' was in some degree inspired. Although this Hellenic ideal survived with a changed expression in Neoplatonism, it could not maintain itself in the face of a victorious Christianity, whose spirit and trend of enthusiasm were essentially alien to the life of the secular thinker and scientist. Stress is now laid on repentance and faith rather than knowledge, and among the divine attributes on Justice, Mercy, and Love rather than on Wisdom and Thought. It might be supposed that the Gnostics, so far as these heretical sects could be called Christian, form an exception; for most of them proclaimed 'Gnosis' or 'Knowledge' as the essense of a perfect life and the key to salvation. But this 'Gnosis' involved no knowledge of the world, for the material world was regarded by their

[1] Stob. *Flor.* 11. 25.

[2] Mullach, *Frag. Phil. Graec.* 1, p. 497.

systems as evil and contemptible, but only 'knowledge of God and his mysteries', and it was obtained not by intellectual effort but by revelation. It was also expounded for the most part in a theosophy, perhaps the most bewildering and insane that was ever presented to the world; and this intellectual degradation is further deepened by the taint of magic and astrology. Therefore, although some of these writings contain here and there flashes of profound thought that might avail for higher religion and ethics, they are on the whole of all Christian or semi-Christian literature the most alien to the Hellenic intelligence.

The relations of the Christian churches in the different periods to science and philosophy are well known to historians and scholars. In the long record we may search in vain for any sincere acceptance of a belief that a contemplative life of pure thought and scientific research was a consecrated or religious life, unless indeed consecrated to the uses of orthodoxy. The Renaissance saw the revival both in thought and art of the Hellenic spirit; but no real reconciliation of that spirit and the Christian was then found nor has been found since. When Mark Pattison declared that he consecrated his life to pure research because he was a Christian, we may feel that he did not reveal the inner spring of his devotion. And the conflict between religion and science has not yet been healed. The toilers in the field of knowledge are many and untiring; but we have no evidence that they are generally warmed by

the feeling that their aspiration is divine. This is the animating faith in Browning's *A Grammarian's Funeral*, it is the source of those inspired words that in his *Hyperion* Keats puts into the mouth of the boy-Apollo—

> Knowledge enormous makes a God of me :
> Names, deeds, gray legends, dire events, rebellions,
> Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,
> Creations and destroyings, all at once
> Pour into the wide hollows of my brain
> And deify me . . .

These words seem strange at the present time ; but they would not have seemed strange to Herodotus, whose master-passion they express, or to Aristotle and his disciples, nor even to Virgil as we may judge from a similar inspired passage in the *Georgics* ; [1] for these men belonged to a nation and an age whose religion made it possible to believe that the life of the thinker, the student, and the artist was in some way consecrated to God.

It may be remarked finally that the attribute of omniscience, into which the essential quality of divine wisdom, the more we reflect on it, is inevitably expanded, is the one philosophic concept of the divine nature that is most easily adapted to popular religion and most intelligible to the popular mind. It is implied in every prayer that recognizes the divine control of the world and guidance of human life. Nor on the deepest reflection is it found to clash, as the attribute of omnipotence may be found,

[1] 2, ll. 475–92.

with the essential ideal of divine benevolence or with the postulate of a free human will. The free human agent may act in this way or that ; and an omniscient deity must be supposed to know how each individual will act, even as in certain cases men may know. Predestination, indeed, destroys human freedom of action. But fore-knowledge is not predestination.

# IX

## THE ATTRIBUTE OF POWER

The discussion of this attribute has been reserved for the latter part of this course, as it forms a natural prelude to the consideration of certain leading problems of difficulty in the philosophy of religion. But the attribute itself belongs to the earliest conception of Godhead. At the stage where religion in our sense begins, man's earliest religious theory involves a belief in supernatural agents more powerful than himself, mysterious, capricious, and therefore formidable. The gods or the spirits are imagined as powerful before they are recognized as beneficent or just. But it was only after an indefinite period of development in our religious history that the consciousness of the divine power could rise to the height of the idea of omnipotence; and many obstructing causes can be given or surmised.

The self-confidence or self-assertion of uncultured man is sometimes as great as his fears are abject; and he believes himself capable of warding off by threats and show of armed force the evils that may attack him from the spirit-world; he can even threaten his gods. Also at an early time he had acquired the art of magic. And magic means the compelling force of mortal man's will over his fellowmen and over the seen and unseen world. It is one

of the misfortunes of our mental history that its appeal to human egoism is so strong that it has survived long under the shadow of many higher religions. Where it prevails in their midst, the conviction that God is omnipotent and that the true religious attitude of the mortal is awe and humility cannot vitally prevail at the same time. If we find such a conviction expressed in the liturgies or sacred texts of a magic-practising people, we must say that it is not really vital and operative; and we must mark this as one of the many incongruities that all higher religions are apt to present. The briefest survey of the leading religions of antiquity gives us interesting illustration.

Throughout all periods of its long history, Egypt was the immemorial land of magic, and on it depended all the hope of the soul's salvation. As we have noted, it was the heroic achievement of Ikhnaton to have suspended it for a brief space, but in vain. Though the rich collection of Egyptian sacred books already discovered contains high religious thoughts and pregnant ethical expressions, the idea of divine omnipotence is almost entirely lacking, and is only implied in Ikhnaton's wonderful hymn and in one or two related documents. And Egyptian mythology presents us with very finite deities that struggle and perish. Even when a High God has risen into permanent power and eminence, Ré or Osiris, the soul of the deceased Pharaoh can be endowed by priestly magic with a power that transcends the divine, and Pharaoh can threaten the Gods with

dreadful consequences if they disobey him.[1] True religion was doubtless to be found at different periods in individuals in Egypt: the texts can attest it; but its upgrowth and diffusion were choked by the sacerdotal magician, and the whole impression presented by those texts is bizarre and contradictory, sometimes childish.

A late and most striking example of the evil influence of magic on religion, especially as blurring the concept of the omnipotence of God, is the Hermetic discourse known by the name of Poimandres, which is penetrated with Egyptian tradition: we find here the initiated possessor of the mysteries claiming complete knowledge of the name and nature of the High God and complete equality with him; and as by a law well known in the magical world the knowledge of the name and attributes of a person gives to the knower complete control over him, the initiate ventures to address his deity in the following way: 'if anything happens to me in this year, this month, this day, or this hour, it will happen to the Great God also . . .'[2] It is easy to discern here a veiled threat, such as the dexterous astrologer conveyed to Louis XI in *Quentin Durward*.

The phenomena of the old Mesopotamian religion also reveal an intimate association between magic and religion.[3] The most exalted religious texts were

[1] The worst documents are given in Breasted, *op. cit.* pp. 127–8; cf. *Arch. Rel. Wissensch.* 16 (1913), p. 85.

[2] Vide Reitzenstein, *Poimandres*, p. 21.

[3] I have considered this point slightly more in detail in *Greece and Babylon*, pp. 173–7.

used for magical purposes, namely for the exorcism of demons; and the Gods themselves work magic. But the Sumerian-Babylonian religion is superior at least in this respect to the Egyptian, that no one in Mesopotamia has the audacity to work magic on the gods. Also the Babylonian texts are more inspired with the sense of the transcendent power and majesty of the higher deities, and in consequence the attitude of the Babylonian worshipper is that of abject humility and self-abasement. Yet though we have many grandiose expressions of the divine power, we cannot say that the dogma of omnipotence was an assured part of Babylonian religion. As we have noted, their divinities are reduced to helplessness if their temples are destroyed; and when Sanherib lays waste their abodes 'the Gods flee like birds up to heaven'.[1]

In ancient India also we must reckon a certain form of magic one among the causes adverse to the clear recognition of omnipotence as a divine essential attribute: what is almost peculiar to India is that the sacrifice itself was sometimes interpreted as a magical act constraining and giving strength to the deities; the view is put forward that the Gods would lose their strength and the sun be unable to rise, if the Brahman did not provide the Soma and the sacrificial fire. Hence arose that strange illusion, the personification of the sacrifice itself; hence also the supremacy in power of the personality of the ideal Brahmin, that is exalted even above the divine. It

[1] Vide *Greece and Babylon*, p. 173.

has already been noted that in the Vedic hymns more stress is laid on the power of the divinities than on their moral attributes ; but in the sacerdotal Brahminical theory, and still more markedly in Buddhism, the spiritual flower of old Hinduism, the power of the personal deity remains far below the height of omnipotence.

In this respect Hellenic religious thought had advanced beyond the Indian and at an early period had invested the High God with this transcendent attribute. For already in the Homeric poems this is the essential prerogative of Zeus, whose will is supreme over the other gods and men, and the view that the poet imagined any shadow-power such as Fate or Destiny in the background controlling the action of Zeus has been shown to be an illusion.[1] We also discern that this dogma was generally maintained by the popular religion ; and the cults of certain communities definitely recognized Zeus as the Leader or the Lord of Fate. It clashed, indeed, like many other ideas accepted by the higher religious thought in Greece, with certain myths, notably with the Prometheus-myth even as treated by Aeschylus, the expounder of the highest religion of Zeus. It was challenged also by the doctrine of necessity, which emerged in the early physical philosophy of Ionia and was embodied in the Stoic system. But this was a philosophic and non-theistic concept that may have helped to undermine the theistic faith of individuals, but was of little avail in

[1] Vide *Cults*, 1, pp. 78–83.

the popular religion. For many centuries the strongest public influence was exercised by the Delphic oracle; but Apollo himself was only regarded as the mouthpiece of the will of Zeus; and even the great goddess of Athens cannot oppose his will in regard to her city, but, as a Madonna, can only intercede. As we have seen, the weakness of all polytheism is that it admits the concept of frail and often perishable deities limited in power and spatial activity.[1] The achievement therefore of Greek polytheism in evolving some belief in the omnipotence of the Highest God is all the more marked. And as we have noted that in other religions the preeminence of magic was a fatal obstacle to the authority of such a belief, it is interesting to observe how small a part by comparison magic played in the Hellenic communities: their high deities scarcely ever practise magic, nor does the priest practise magic on them.

In the earlier and purer form of the Zarathustrian system, according to its recent interpreters, we discern a high religion released on the whole from magic, and coming very near to the height of monotheism and the recognition of the divine omnipotence: only, even the prophet himself may have believed that Ahura Mazdāh was troubled and for a period restrained from universal dominion and the full

[1] Even Plato admits such deities into his system in the *Timaeus*, subordinating them to the highest ineffable Power, who lends to them a portion of his own immortality for the purpose of the creation of man, p. 41 B–D.

fruition of his beneficence by the evil spirit who may have been regarded as coeval with the good; and this element of discord is developed later into the Magian dualism, according to which the High God must be regarded, at least for the period before the final triumph of good, as finite in power.

On the other hand, the religious thought of Judaism impressed the national consciousness with a deep sense of the omnipotence of Jahwé and avoided the danger of a dualism, in the divine world at least, by assigning to him the sole power of creation both of good and of evil.[1] And the Judaic tradition, fixing once for all the dogma that infinite power was essential to the highest idea of divinity, was inherited and has been strongly maintained both by Christianity and Islam. The dogma may not be clearly comprehended, and certainly all its implications are not realized, by the popular religious mind; but, where there is strong theistic faith inspiring earnest prayer and devotion, the mind of the worshipper is generally moved with the conviction that the deity he addresses is all-powerful; for thus alone can he be strengthened in the hope of his prayer's fulfilment; and this conviction has been found even among savages.[2] Thus the dogma

[1] It is only the author of 'Wisdom' who in 1. 13–16 ('God made not death: for he created all things that they might have being . . . but ungodly men by their own act and their words called death unto them') contradicts the orthodox Jewish tradition represented by Isaiah and Ezekiel (Isaiah 45. 7: 'I form the light and create darkness: I make peace and create evil').

[2] The report on the Fan bribe of the Bantus, *Intern. Cong.*

may have a 'pragmatic' as well as a philosophic origin.

It is of interest to observe by what various means at the varying levels of religious thought the divine power has been supposed to operate. While the anthropomorphic imagination is still primitive, the deity works with physical force, superhuman in degree but similar to man's, and often with physical weapons. This is the picture presented by the epic mythology of the Aryan races in the period of advanced barbarism, the Vedic, the Scandinavian, and the Homeric for example; even the Hellenic Zeus, though too majestic to mingle in the Homeric fray, was occasionally represented as an armed warrior in Greek art. And this primitive view still survives in our higher poetry and religious metaphor; even Milton has not wholly discarded it; and in the early Hebrew war-song Jahwé is frankly described as 'a man of war'. But another weapon equally familiar to primitive man, which he often regards as more effectual than physical force, is magic; and as he naïvely armed his deity with his own weapons of war or the chase, it was inevitable that he should impute to him the more cryptic manifestation of power through magical working. Thus the God may himself become an arch-magician, weaving spells and enchantment; Odin has knowledge of all runes; the Vedic Fire-God Agni 'upholds the sky by his efficacious spells',[1] and this belief may survive in

*Relig. Basel*, Abh. 2, p. 191; God is regarded as the 'Father of Life', 'the All-Powerful'.

[1] *Vedic Hymns*, pt. ii, p. 61.

religions otherwise advanced. It maintained itself strongly in Egypt and Babylon; and the title 'arch-magician' is specially attached to the greatest of the Babylonian Gods, Ea and Marduk;[1] it is specially against the demons and the evil human sorcerer that the divine magic is invoked.

As human thought becomes saner or more scientific or more profoundly religious, it rises above the old belief in magic; and regards as absurd and blasphemous the view that the divine omnipotence needs magic to assist its work. The high religious belief more consonant with the majesty of the Omnipotent is that the Ruler of the Universe works his will by a simple 'fiat': 'God said, Let there be light: and there was light.' This was the view of the ancient Hellene[2] and the ancient Israelite as it is of Islam and Christianity. We find the same direct manifestation of power in the Peruvian myth of creation: 'the creator Pachacamac made all things by his word "Let earth and Heaven be".'[3]

Nevertheless so strong and long-enduring has been the hold of magic on the human mind, that its influence is subtly interfused with our higher theistic thought and expression. There is a magical tradition, though it passes unnoticed by the ordinary reader,

[1] Jastrow, *op. cit.* 1, p. 311.

[2] I have only found in the Hellenic records one clear example of a god practising magic, namely, in the Hymn of the Kouretes, *Arch. f. Relig. Wissensch.* 1914, p. 21; but Pindar in the 4th Pythian ode invents or accepts the myth that Aphrodite invented a magic love-charm whereby Jason won Medea.

[3] Payne, *History of the New World*, i, p. 460.

behind the phrase of frequent occurrence in our sacred texts, 'The word of God'. We note in the Old Testament how frequently Jahwé manifests his power by his 'Word', and how 'the Word' appears almost as a personal emanation from the High God, all powerful in Heaven and earth: 'He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly.' [1] 'So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please.' [2] In a striking passage in the Book of Wisdom [3] the personification is stronger and more impressive and the word has become a personal agent of the Wrath of God—'Thine all-powerful word leaped from heaven out of the royal throne, a stern warrior into the midst of the doomed land, bearing as a sharp sword thy unfeigned commandment, and standing it filled all things with death.'

With the later momentous history of this personification of the Word, which, quickened and deepened by fusion with the Hellenic Logos or Reason, becomes presented in the Joannine Gospel as the second person of the Trinity, we are not here concerned. It is only important for our present purpose to note the close parallelism which Dr. Langdon has pointed out [4] between the Word or 'Memra' in the Hebrew texts and the Sumerian Inim or Enem, which also means 'Word' and is also personified in the Sumerian liturgies as the Word of God, sometimes as kindly

[1] Psalms 147. 15. [2] Isaiah 55. 11. [3] 18. 15.
[4] In Hastings, *E. R. E.* vol. 12, p. 749.

but more frequently as wrathful. The strangest of these are those known as the laments of the 'Weeping Mother', who is Mother Earth mourning for the afflictions that the race of men, her own children, are suffering from the destructive activity of 'the Word'. 'In the home it causeth life to cease: in the flocks it causeth life to cease: to the wedded ones it causeth life to cease: among children it causeth life to cease'; and there are many more Sumerian texts equally expressive of the terrible operation of the Word of God, Marduk or Enlil.[1]

Of this phenomenon it is not a sufficient explanation to say that, as the word that issues from the mouth of the Oriental despot is an effective manifestation of his power, for it may contain a command which is sure to be executed, so a similar but transcendent power of the word may be naturally transferred to the absolute divine ruler. This might suffice if we were dealing merely with the simple and sublime text: 'God said, Let there be light and there was light.' But it fails to explain the mysterious force of the personification and the predominant stress laid on the withering power of the divine word. As we are in the atmosphere of Sumerian-Babylonian religion we have the right to suspect the influence of human magic. For the human magician the word or formula has a mysterious self-executive power; also it is projected with great stress out of himself as an ebullition of his will-

[1] Vide my *Greece and Babylon*, pp. 176–7, where the references are given.

power, as a personal part of himself; moreover, it was generally used against his enemies with blasting effect. Now if it is the human magician's occult word-power that has been transferred to the Babylonian gods, whom we otherwise know as practitioners in magic, we shall more easily understand the occult power of their 'word' in the passages quoted above: it is personified, because it is the violent ebullition of their personal will; more stress is laid on its destructive than on its beneficent force, because the magician's word is more usually blasting than healing.

But this *a priori* speculation can be fortified by some positive evidence. Dr. Langdon in the article mentioned above cites only one piece of evidence,[1] which is certainly of sufficient importance, namely that the same Sumerian word 'inim' is also used for 'an incantation'. And to this we may add certain Babylonian texts in which the Divine Word appears, as we may say, in magical associations. When just before the great cosmic struggle between the High Gods and Chaos, Tiamat, the Mother and Queen of the powers of darkness, chooses her champion Qingou as leader, she proclaims: 'I have pronounced thy magic formula, in the assembly of the Gods I have made thee great,'[2] we may understand

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 749.

[2] Dhorme, *Choix*, &c., p. 25, l. 39 (*Greece and Babylon*, p. 176); we might compare with this a text in the Pahlavi Bundahis, the Parsi book of creation, telling how Ahura threw the evil spirit into confusion and impotence by pronouncing a sacred formula of the Parsis; the formula is quite irrelevant to Ahura's action,

her to mean that she has equipped him with the word whereby he can subdue the enemy. Also there are texts where the power of the Divine Word is contrasted with the power of the human magician; thus, 'the Word of Bel-Marduk is said to be stronger than any exorciser or diviner',[1] and again, 'The Word which stilleth the heavens above . . . a prophet it hath not, a magician it hath not', which we may reasonably interpret as signifying that no prophet can adequately expound the Word, no magician can control it. It appears then that in the Sumerian thought which the Semitic Mesopotamians inherited, the Word of God was the arch-magic of the world, the most tremendous manifestation of the power of God.

We may suppose that the thought of the Hebrew Semites followed the same path independently from the earth to the skies; or that at some period, before or during the exile, it was directly influenced by the Babylonian-Sumerian liturgies. We need not impute to to any of the writers of our sacred texts any consciousness of the magical associations of the Word; but in tracing out the origin of the Biblical usage we must reckon with Babylon and the magical hypothesis.

This mystic development of the Word as a vehicle of God's power is only found, so far as I am aware,[2] in

but the God is following the practice of the earthly magician in quoting a sacred text for magical purposes; *Sacred Books of the East*, 5, p. 8.

[1] *Greece and Babylon*, p. 177.

[2] In the Zarathustrian text quoted in *Evolution of Religion*, p. 217, the Word, to which cosmic power is attached, is of different import: it is the whole message of Zarathustra.

Babylon and Israel; it remains strange and unfamiliar to the Western and Northern mind.

More obvious and more familiar to us is the use of the divine name as a chief vehicle for the manifestation of the divine power; and the Name is conceived to attach so closely to the divine personality that like the Word it lends itself to personification as the agent of the divinity. The occult power of the divine name has been the theme of recent treatises; and I have illustrated it elsewhere from the religious texts and legends of many different races.[1] Further illustration may be added from older and more recent Indian religious literature: the name of Amītābha, sovereign of a Buddhist paradise, was so sacred, according to later Buddhistic literature, that 'the most evil, by merely uttering the name of Amītābha, perhaps but in blasphemy, are reborn in Paradise';[2] in the services of the Sikh religion, composed by the Guru Nanak, there are many texts proclaiming the mystic potency of the name of God: by the mere hearing of the name men attain complete enlightenment, power over death, and immunity from sorrow and sin:[3] it is the name that energizes the power of the unchangeable Lord in the soul of the hearer. As regards our own sacred books we are so familiar with passages in the Old and New Testament where

[1] *Evolution of Religion*, pp. 183–90.

[2] Keith, *Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 299.

[3] Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, i, p. 200; Macnicol, *Indian Theism*, p. 217.

the divine name is invested with a mystic potency, a half-personal automatic power, which can even emanate from God into others,[1] that the ordinary reader does not realize how strange and alien all this is to modern logic and thought. Its origin is suggested by our prevalent popular phrase 'a name to conjure with'. Here again we have an example of old-world magic bequeathing a leading and pregnant thought to higher theistic religion. The human magic of all races attests the occult power that attaches to the name of a person and sometimes of a thing; and the higher in the state is the person the greater is the power of his name. The 'virtue' therefore inherent in a God's name is very great, and it behoves the magician or the exorciser to know it and to use it. The transference of the superstition from the region of magic to religion may well have occurred in Egypt, and it was probably thence that the Israelites derived the illusion concerning the divine name, which, as we have noted, has had disastrous secular results. For Egypt was the very metropolis of magic, where men used magic on the Gods and the Gods used magic as the chief organ of power; and the most potent vehicle of magic was the name. The two most salient illustrations of this are the story of the creation preserved in the papyrus of Nesi-Amsu, and the legend of Ra and Isis and his wounding by her serpent contained in a papyrus of Turin, both translated or paraphrased

[1] E. g. Exodus 23. 21 (Jahwé sends his angel to the people and commands them 'Obey his voice, for my Name is in him').

by Budge in his *Egyptian Magic*.[1] The creation myth is perhaps the strangest yet imagined by man. The God Neb-er-tcher, desirous of creating the Universe, first uttered his own name as a 'word of power', and then evolved himself and all the world. The proposition that an undeveloped God developed his own name and from it everything else is a masterpiece of occult theosophy. Again, in the story of Isis and Ra, we see how the omnipotence of Ra and his direction of the Universe is bound up with his name which he keeps hidden within himself; and when Isis guilefully extracts it from him the omnipotence passes to her.

It must be reckoned to the advantage both of the Hellenic and the Zarathustrian religions that scarcely any trace of this magical power of the divine name appears in their theistic thought. Ahura creates by his thought[2]—'im Anfang war der Sinn'; so also in Greece the popular view, so far as it can be discerned, agreed with the view of philosophic theism that the chief manifestation of the power of God, whether as creator or director of the Universe, was his Reason or 'Nous'. And if to Reason we add the concept of active will, the claims of faith and sane intellect are satisfied.

We have so far been considering the means whereby the divine power has been believed to operate. It is interesting also to consider the signs of its manifestation in the world. According to our various

[1] Pp. 136–42 and 160–2.

[2] *Gathas*, Yasna 31. 11 (Moulton, *Early Zoroastrianism*, p. 353).

grades of mentality and the different periods of our mental history these have been found either in the sphere of law or in the sphere of the lawless and capricious ; and we should consider how the attribute of omnipotence has been or can be applied in both. We have the right to believe that the primitive mind is more excited by that which is extraordinary and occurs at rare intervals than by the regular sequence and the constant order of recurrence of phenomena ; and early theistic faith discerns more easily in the former, for instance in the hurricane, the thunder, the earthquake, the pestilence, the rainbow, the undoubted manifestations of divine power. If such power so manifested is regarded as omnipotent, it might be the omnipotence of an arbitrary despot bound by no law but by caprice and varying emotion. It is at this stage of thought on God, untempered by any knowledge of natural Law, that miracles abound. In the absence of any knowledge of the harmony and concatenation in the movements of the heavenly bodies, it was easy to believe that an omnipotent God might cause the sun to stand still, to please Joshua. But at an early point in our advance towards deeper thought, we have been drawn to link our idea of divine omnipotence with the idea of divine wisdom ; and wisdom implies plan and purpose which are naturally opposed to the arbitrary and irregular. Gradually also and with difficulty but with ever-increasing conviction our minds have risen to the conception of the natural world, first proclaimed by the physicists of Ionia in the sixth

century B. C. as a great cosmos of ordered and connected forces governed by Law. If this physical revelation is combined with theistic faith, these so-called Laws of Nature may be regarded as manifestations and determinations of God's infinite power and wisdom. And now it is no longer the arbitrary and irregular, but the fixed and rational order of things that is recognized as best displaying the transcendent majesty of omnipotence. Such recognition is broadcast throughout Greek philosophy where it uses theistic language at all: its most eloquent expression is found in the Hymn to Zeus composed by the Stoic Kleanthes in the early part of the third century B. C., and using the language—unusual in Stoic documents—of strong monotheistic faith: the High God is the omnipotent power, to whom we ourselves bear some likeness, who harmonizes all discords in the universe, and manifests himself in cosmic law and order: 'there is no greater privilege than this both for mortal men and for gods, ever to sing full meetly the praise of universal law' (the κοινὸς λόγος).[1]

According as the popular religion is penetrated with this deeper recognition of law and harmony in the physical universe as the true manifestation of divine power, the more difficult it becomes to find place in the religion for the old popular faith in miracles which is an immemorial tradition handed

[1] Vide Mullach, *Frag. Philos. Graec.* vol. 1, p. 151. Cf. Arnim, *Stoic. Vet. Frag.* 1, fr. 537; Bevan, *Stoics and Sceptics*, p. 54.

down to us and which is enshrined to some extent in our Sacred Books, so that to abandon it appears to impair the authority and value of these. Any special record of that which we call a miracle may be attacked on three different lines of criticism. The witnesses that give the evidence may be shown to be inadequate, contradictory, or generally untrustworthy ; this is the line of historical or literary criticism ; thus as the Book of Daniel is proved to lack authenticity and historic accuracy, the value of its record of the miraculous is impaired. Secondly, the miracles recorded may seem trivial and ignoble, beneath the majesty of divinity, such as those contained in the apocryphal narratives of the childhood of Jesus, or those which from similar sources have strayed into our Gospels, such as the cursing the fig-tree, the water turned into wine ; the disbelief in these therefore may be demanded in the name of higher religion ; and this criticism from the point of view of spiritual values is often the most effective and purgative. Thirdly, credence may be refused to a record of miracle on the ground that it involves too violent a rupture of a well-established sequence or order of phenomena in the natural world ; and it is on this ground that the quarrel has arisen between religion and science which still continues. But the sphere of contention is not as wide as it was. We no longer speak of miracles of healing as violations of the laws of nature, as we have come to understand more about psychiatry, auto-suggestion, and hypnotism. On the other hand the

educated theologian seems willing to admit that an omnipotent and wise God does not normally and capriciously interfere with the action of the physical laws of the world; he no longer thinks of the Eternal, to use Pope's pungent phrase, as of 'some weak prince . . . prone for his favourites to reverse his laws'. But he probably would not at once accept the dictum of one of our greatest among recent philosophers, 'miracle is incompatible with plan'.[1] He might feel justified in drawing a conclusion from the accepted faith in the divine omnipotence and wisdom that such a deity at a crisis of transcendent importance, such as the Incarnation, might choose in accordance with a higher plan of spiritual policy to disturb the normal order at a particular point without allowing the disturbance to reverberate through the whole; for the difficulty of imagining a limited disturbance or suspension is only felt by the severely scientific mind. To this extent at least the scientific spirit has gained ground and penetrated our religious consciousness that we severely restrict the occasions when the operation of the miraculous may be believed; and we regard the rage for miracles as the sign of a disordered time or disordered brain; but we have not yet revised and purged our Sacred Books.

The subject that has just been discussed is intimately connected with the religious value of prayer, that immemorial act of worship which seems an essential part of all religion, lower and higher.

[1] Bosanquet in *Proceedings of British Academy*, 1905-6, p. 238.

In trying elsewhere [1] to trace out the evolution of prayer, I noted how in its primitive forms it was blent with magic and thus degraded, and how this taint survives in some forms of advanced religion. Here we are only concerned with its pure type, the type of humble petition to an omnipotent power to grant favours or help. Given the concept of an all-powerful God who governs without fixed plan or who like an earthly despot can be moved by tears and supplications to change his plan, no restriction is placed on the proper objects of prayer; and it need not be thought irreligious to pray for the most childish and grotesque. But as we gain the more educated sense of the laws of nature and as we raise and define our conception of the attribute of omnipotence by linking it with wisdom, which implies a mind working in accordance with a plan and with steadfastness of thought and will, we feel that there are certain things we cannot pray for; and the questions what objects of prayer are legitimate and finally whether any prayer at all is justifiable become pressing on the religious conscience. Our own liturgy stands in urgent need of revision in respect of the objects for which we think it legitimate to proffer prayer: we do not pray for alterations in the tides or movements of the planets; but we show ourselves on the primitive level of knowledge and religion when we pray for or against rain, as though the weather, being variable, obeyed no law but depended on the caprice or temper of an emotional

[1] *Evolution of Religion*, pp. 162–232.

deity; and we seem to impute to the divine ruler a startling inconstancy of purpose when we petition him, as in the Burial Service, to hasten the Day of Judgement. Certain thinkers, including some of the earlier Christian fathers, have arrived at the conviction that complete faith and trust in the beneficence and wisdom of God rules out prayer for any particular object of desire; and that the right religious attitude is only to be expressed in some formula of humble acquiescence in the divine will: such as our familiar Christian utterance 'thy will be done', or the prayer of Epictetus, 'Do with me what thou wilt: my will is thy will: I appeal not against thy judgements'.[1] But this seems to limit the ideal prayer to the attitude of acquiescent passivity. It is possible to discover for it a more active efficacy reconcilable at the same time with our clear conception of an all-wise Beneficence. The Neoplatonists declared that the ideal justification for prayer was that it raised the mind to 'direct communion and converse with God'; [2] this is a nobler account of it than the ordinary, but it leaves us uninformed what exactly happens in that communion and what is the right relation of the communicants. In William James's statement,[3] 'in prayer spiritual energy which otherwise would slumber does become active, and spiritual work of some kind is effected

[1] Epictet. (Schenkle, p. 479).

[2] Porphyry ap. Procl. *in Tim.* 2. 64 B; Procl. *in Tim.* 2. 65; Sallustius, *De Diis et Mundo*, c. 16; *Max. Tyr.* Dissert. XI.

[3] *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 477.

really', there is something that the experience of many will endorse as true; but it needs clearer analysis. If we purge prayer of all reference to the physical world, so far as this is governed by natural laws, and only apply it for the increase of spiritual power and life, we may maintain that prayers for spiritual things, increase of love, increase of mental power, of will-power, the prayer of the thinker and the artist for stronger light and clearer vision, are justifiable and effective as bringing with them in some measure their own fulfilment; for they imply a self or a soul (as we may say) raised to a higher pitch by striving to reach communion with the higher source of inspiration; and only on the self so attuned can the influence demanded be shed. This indeed may seem to limit and deny the omnipotence of God; but that omnipotence was already limited when a free spiritual being was allowed to emerge. And it may be a law of our freedom that free effort on our part is a necessary condition for the influx of new spiritual power; and that spiritual prayer is the open path down which it flows. This may be accepted as a final justification of a certain type of prayer and as giving us the only valid type; but it bears with it the corollary that prayers for an individual or individuals other than oneself have no validity; for prayer-communion is a strong operation of free-will, which each individual must make for himself. And herein, more conspicuously than elsewhere, is revealed the wide cleavage that at present exists between the highest theistic thought and the popular religion.

# X

## METAPHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES, AND PROBLEMS OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

A DISCOURSE on the attributes of God is not obliged to deal with the whole range of metaphysical problems that are the usual subject-matter of general treatises on the philosophy of religion. And the view maintained throughout this course has been mainly historical rather than philosophical or dogmatic, being chiefly fixed upon the phenomena of the living and working religions. Familiarity with these soon enables one to realize how slightly their votaries or their officials are moved or touched by the abstract metaphysical speculations on the nature or being of God that sometimes absorb the attention of the professional philosopher. The fruit of his thoughts is generally gathered only by an esoteric circle of pupils: the philosopher is rarely a saint or an active reformer. But we cannot say that the philosophy of religion is therefore a negligible fact for the historian of the popular creeds. Among such a people as the ancient Greeks, with a certain racial bias towards abstract thinking, it was likely enough that the thought of the philosophic schools, the Platonic for instance, the Stoic, the Epicurean, should have penetrated to some extent the popular mind. There is reason for believing that the deistic

thought of the eighteenth century influenced some of our divines. And when members of our hierarchy, such as Dean Rashdall and Dean Inge, are specially trained and expert philosophers, there is the more chance that their speculations may affect the average religious mind, may modify the accepted orthodoxy, and may even effect at last some fundamental revision of our liturgy. And though the earnest student of the modern philosophic literature on this theme may often be depressed by the consciousness of the remoteness of much of it from the real life of effective religion, yet the religious historian must take note of the original thought of the lonely thinker; for he must reckon with the possibility that the new idea may quicken in the organism of the general religious consciousness, especially in a period of intellectual ferment. But this concluding chapter must confine itself to the minor task of surveying cursorily certain philosophic ideas concerning the nature and attributes of God that are reflected or have been adopted in the leading religions of the world or may be regarded as available for them, and of considering their coherence.

There are some pronouncements of religious philosophy, both ancient and modern, that do not concern our present subject and may be regarded by one conversant with the real world of religion as barren of all possible value for that world. By a certain fatal logic, to which those idealist thinkers are specially exposed who have a passion for the Absolute, it has been found possible to etherialize the concept

of God into a being ineffable, unknowable, unthinkable, superior to all attributes or definite determinations, finally becoming an exalted but negative symbol which may be called a Super-Nothing, 'Ex nihilo nihil fit'. If this were ultimately the truth about God, he does not concern us. That of which the highest expression is the entire negation of the forms of our own consciousness may be of value for metaphysics, but is a non-religious concept. Or we accept the term 'ineffable' as a divine attribute of interest for religion, only when it is used, as it has often been, merely as an expression of the adoration of the ecstatic worshipper, conscious that all words are inadequate to the height and the depth of the divine personality. The use of this term in such a mood does not prevent the user dogmatizing very definitely and severely on the nature and attributes of God.[1] And unless we can believe that we possess some knowledge or intuition of these that we can trust, the concept of God can have no value or power for our lives.

For other reasons we may also find that the interpretation of God as the Absolute in some philosophic systems renders him of no avail for real worship. The term indeed is often ambiguously used.

In speaking of God as the Absolute, we might

[1] We may say the same of the attribute 'Incomprehensible' (wrongly given in our older English version of the Athanasian Creed as a translation of the original 'Immensus'); this attribute is sometimes used in cloudy theologic speculation to justify our reason in attaching mutually contradictory ideas to our concept of God.

mean no more than that He is the Highest Being in the cosmos, of absolute value in himself and for us, and the source of whatever absolute value certain parts of the world, certain determinations or aspects of things, certain activities of our human life, certain moods of our consciousness, possess for us; the source, for instance, of our perceptions of duty, truth, beauty, nobility of soul, to which we give an absolute value. Thus interpreted, the notion of the Absolute is consistent with our belief in a divine personality, and gives the strongest support to our spiritual valuation of life and the world.

But in much modern speculation the Absolute is a term used in a more comprehensive sense, as expressing the unconditioned and unlimited, the All-in-All of the Universe, the sum of all reality, beyond which and outside which there can be nothing real; and much idealist philosophy tends, though often incoherently, to identify this with God. Such writers do not, perhaps, realize how religion, in any sense in which it has yet been recognized, is instinctively repelled by such an account of the idea of divinity. The cause of this repulsion may be briefly stated.

If God is the Absolute All-in-All, it might be possible to imagine him as conscious—we have seen that it is only Indian religious thought that could tolerate an unconscious God [1]—for the Universe might be imagined as conscious in all its parts; but he could not be conceived as a person, for personality

[1] Vide *supra*, p. 21.

implies individuality over against others,[1] and there are no others over against God so conceived. Will, then, the Absolute All-in-All, which is God, remain of value for us if impersonal? The utterance of the Indian sage, quoted above—'the worship of the Impersonal laid no hold upon my heart'[2]—appeals to us as the voice of all real religion. Worship, the accompaniment of all active religion, and Love the essence of the highest, seem both impossible and irrelevant to the impersonal All-in-All, besides which there is no 'other'. For, as Dean Inge rightly insists, 'the soul needs real *otherness*: else there could be no worship and no love'.[3] And it is doubtful if in a real sense we can love the Impersonal, or any abstraction, even though we write it with a capital letter. In our common language we may say indeed that we 'love' Beauty, Justice, Music, Philosophy, &c., and the Greek term ἔρως was no less variously applied by Plato and others. But this means that we do not care to distinguish between delight and ardent pursuit on the one hand and, on the other, Love in its strict meaning, which is a spiritual mood of one person or at least one conscious being reflected upon another. The more ecstatic in its outpouring is the love of the religious votary, the more strongly it demands and projects a divine personality.

[1] 'Personality can only belong to one who is not everything, but stands in relation to others outside himself. Such conditions cannot apply to the Deity.' Inge, *Plotinus*, 1, p. 250 (the writer speaks in his own person here, not as merely interpreting Plotinus).

[2] p. 20.

[3] *Op. cit.* 2, p. 229.

Again, such divine attributions as benevolence, justice, and mercy, which, as we have seen, are part of the foundation of all higher religions hitherto received or constructed, are found meaningless for the Absolute All-in-All.

Further, the interpretation of God as the Absolute in the sense of the All-in-All, the sum of all reality in the Universe, can be reconciled with no other system of religion save Pantheism in its most comprehensive sense. For a narrower meaning of Pantheism, in which it is equivalent merely to the term 'Omnipresence of deity', a conceivable attribute of a personal God—just as we might call that strange utterance pantheistic which is recorded in the recently discovered 'Logia' of Christ, 'Lift the stone and there thou will find Me: split the wood and there I am' [1]—must be distinguished from its profounder significance conveying the theory that God is all things and beside God there is no other reality, the theory of the Absolute set forth above. Religion and thought are then confronted with a dilemma of which one horn is fatal to our sense of values, the other to our cognition of reality. For either the evil, the monstrous,[2] and the cruel in our lives and in the world are as much part of God as the good, the beautiful, and the beneficent; or we must negate the former as unreal and allow reality

[1] *Logia*, Locke and Sanday, 5.

[2] It has been suggested that God might be allowed the monstrous in the world, e.g. the hippopotamus, so as to indulge his genial trait of humour: the author of this suggestion is not Aristophanes, but Dean Inge, *Plotinus*, 2, p. 241.

only to the latter as alone worthy of divinity. If we accept the former view, we lose all higher sanction for our moral and aesthetic valuations: evil and ugliness are as divine as good and beauty; therefore pantheism in this sense rules out all possibility of loving God, and we cannot construct a higher religion upon it.

To adopt the other alternative, that we should deny the reality of the evil and monstrous, is to deny the autonomous value of our mental experience. But our moral and aesthetic intuitions and judgements that pronounce on evil and ugliness have just as much validity, no more and no less, as those that pronounce on the good and the beautiful; and we are convinced of the reality of the one set of facts in the same measure as we are convinced of the reality of the other. Idealist philosophers from Plato down to Bradley, especially those devoted to the Absolute and the One, have made much use of the doctrine of 'illusion'; the phenomena of sense, the perceptions of evil and pain, of a material world, of our own finite and individual existence, have all been negated at various times by these thinkers as unreal illusions or regarded at best as 'shadows' of the real. The corresponding term in Indian speculation is 'Maya', a great cosmic force, created by the highest deity, the source of the illusion and falseness of all phenomena.[1] But none of these philosophers, neither

[1] It is probably this dreary sense of unreality infecting the Indian mind that has hindered for centuries the growth of physical science among that people.

Plato and Plotinus nor our moderns, ever succeeds in explaining the fact of the illusion and the shadow; and many seem often unconscious of the truth that a shadow can only arise from at least two real things. We may discern a fundamental vice in all these speculations of the Platonic or neo-idealist trend, that value is confused with reality. We may have a hierarchy of higher and lower values ranging from the minutest particle of the Universe up to God; nevertheless, the lowest may be regarded as no less real than the highest.

The concept, then, of the Absolute understood in the sense explained, may possibly be of value for metaphysics; but though St. Paul might look forward in a different sense to a final consummation of the world when 'God shall be all in all', no higher religion has been logically constructed on it, nor can we imagine how it could avail for such a purpose in our present mental conditions.

The more special speculation concerning the divine nature is mainly concerned with the concepts of Eternity, Immutability, Creativeness, Infinity, Omnipotence, considered as attributes or functions of God, and these are concepts that are reflected with varying degrees of clarity in the higher religions, and each of them when analysed and correlated with others presents problems of difficulty.

That the divine existence is by its very essence eternal is and has been an inevitable dogma of all advanced belief, and the idea of temporary or perishable deities, though Plato and the later Stoics

may have played with it, belongs to the infantile stage of religious thought. Now eternity is susceptible of at least two interpretations: (*a*) as infinite duration of time, endlessly extending back into the past and forward into the future, a concept no less intelligible than that of infinite space; (*b*) as timelessness, the conceivable attribute of a Being that transcended Time or was outside Time. The former is the sense in which the High God has been popularly believed to be eternal, and this presents no difficulty to the popular imagination. But religious philosophy, both earlier and later, has shown some preference for the latter interpretation; and a dim reflex of the concept of timelessness may be discerned in the mystic formula 'I am that I am', and in the eschatologic belief that after the final judgement of the world 'Time shall be no more', which our hymnology has borrowed from Revelation (10. 6). The suggestions prompting to this view appear to have been mainly the impression that the time-distinctions of past, present, and future are only proper to our finite consciousness and are impossible determinations of the consciousness of an Eternal Absolute God, to whose cognition the whole sum of things is presented as an everlasting 'Now'. But an everlasting 'Now' is after all a time-determination; and it is doubtful if the idea of divine timelessness has been successfully worked out by any thinker into coherence with other theologic concepts accepted as essential. It was thought to clear away certain difficulties that early arose in religious and philo-

sophic thought concerning the divine creation of the world, a belief deemed essential by many, though, as we have seen, not by all the higher religions. On the view of a Deity existing in eternal time and of the creation of the world as a divine act performed once for all at some remote point of time, the view of Judaism, early Christianity, Mazdeism, and Islamism, the question was sure to arise as to the motive which induced God to begin creation, and the answers were various, some being quaint and even frivolous, as that God desired creatures to appreciate and praise him or desired to admire himself as externalized in nature ; [1] the answer that appealed to the higher imagination of some early Christians and some Gnostics was that God needed spiritual creatures of like nature, on whom he could shed his love and make participants of his joy. But the more perplexing question remained—what was God doing before he created the world—to which St. Augustine provides no serious answer.[1] Modern speculation has thought to escape these perplexities by insisting on the concept of a timeless God and on the view of creation as a timeless essential activity of the divine nature, so that God cannot be understood or imagined without the world, and the world or some world must be regarded as co-eternal with God.[2] But no

[1] Aristotle or the writer of the *Magna Moralia* seems conscious of the absurdity of God continually contemplating himself, *Magn. Mor.* 2, 15, pp. 1212–1213. St. Augustine, *Confessions*, 11. 12, quotes as a merry joke the answer to the question what God was doing before he created Heaven and Earth : 'He was preparing Hell for priers into mysteries.'

[2] Vide Pringle-Pattison, *op. cit.* p. 303.

ancient or recent writer has succeeded in showing how the idea of creation is compatible with the idea of timelessness. To maintain is not to create: one may timelessly maintain a static world; one cannot timelessly create; for to create is necessarily to make something new, something which at least in that shape did not exist before; and 'new' and 'before' are time-determinations. If therefore by the constraining essence of his nature God is eternally creative, an activity that demands a time-determination is part of his essence, and this clashes with the concept of his timelessness.

The popular religions, including Christianity, have avoided the difficulties that arise from the idea of divine timelessness by interpreting eternity as endless duration of time. But Christianity, while insisting on 'the Eternal' as an essential attribute of Godhead, was troubled, as no other religion has ever been, by the problem of reconciling this attribute with the sonship and divinity of Christ. We know how the mental agony caused by this incoherence of two ideas came near to wrecking the Roman Empire. Even such a champion of the early Church as Tertullian inclined somewhat to the 'Arian' view that, though Christ as in some sense the Logos was co-eternal with the Father, he was not co-eternal as the Son, Fatherhood and Sonship necessarily implying priority and posteriority.[1] The finally victorious Catholic dogma proclaiming the co-eternal Son, which virtually denies the right of the intellect

[1] Vide Kidd, *History of the Early Church*, vol. 1, pp. 327–8.

to deal with religious concepts, is naturally prefaced in the Athanasian Creed by the dogma that God is incomprehensible. The logic of the incomprehensible, if relentlessly developed, may lead to the negation of all religious thought; for it may lead to the conviction, fatal to real religion, that God is ineffable, unknowable, unthinkable. It is the intellectual advantage of the Unitarian faith that it refuses the self-contradictory concept. As regards the thought of the average religious man of to-day, so far as he may be imagined to think on the problem of divine sonship, it is probable that its trend is unconsciously 'Arian'; for we discern the audacious but probably unintentional Arianism of Milton, and we know how great has been his influence on the popular imagination of England.

With the idea of eternity are often linked the ideas of permanence and immutability, and most philosophic speculation on the nature of God has regarded unchangeableness as an essential attribute. There is some deep thought underlying the popular discussion in the second book of Plato's *Republic* concerning the illusion of Greek mythology in narrating the frequent shape-changings of the deity: if God is the sum of all perfection he cannot change, for the change in him could only be for the worse.[1] The theory concerning the first cause in the eleventh book of Aristotle's *Metaphysic*[2] tends to identify

[1] p. 382 E, an opinion quoted with approval by Hooker, *Works*, 1, p. 275 (Keble).

[2] 1072 B.

God with the First Cause that moves all things, itself being unmoved. An exception to this prevailing view of Greek theology appears in some Stoic speculation which made changefulness part of the divine character,[1] as Stoic theory tended to immerse the Godhead in the cosmos. According to Indian thought a permanent unchanging God could have no relation to the movement and activity of life, for according to its narrower view permanence is excluded from activity.[2] But the Greek mind achieved the deeper theory that the power which caused change and movement might itself remain unchanged and unmoved; and therefore such a power might be interpreted as a divine creator and the source of life and activity. Now much that is found in the popular thought of the higher religions of the world is consistent with this view; for we find it striving to apprehend God as an Eternal Being essentially the same through eternity, but able to deal freely and creatively with a changeful world, only—according to the higher view—dealing with the manifold and changing material according to the settled purpose of his own thought and the laws of his own nature. From the whirl of change and transcience rest is found or sought, at least by the Western World, in the concept of an unchanging God; and we try to discover a fixed basis for our moral and

[1] In the definition of God as *πνεῦμα νοερὸν καὶ πυρῶδες οὐκ ἔχον μὲν μορφὴν μεταβάλλον δὲ εἰς ἃ βούλεται* (Plut. *De Plac. Philos.* 1. 5, p. 879 D.).

[2] Keith, *Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 184.

spiritual values by conceiving them as derived from the eternal laws of the divine will or mind. This feeling and this yearning find frequent utterance in our liturgy and hymns—

> Change and decay in all around I see;
> O Thou who changest not, abide with me.

A Greek poet[1] in a moment of highest inspiration contrasts the eternal life of the moral laws of God with the transitory and capricious decrees of man. And Indian thought where it is strongly theistic lays stress on the same aspect of the divine nature: 'He is unseen, inscrutable, omnipotent, the kind creator: the merciful alone is permanent: the whole world beside is transitory: call him permanent on whose head no destiny is recorded.'[2] But deeper reflection does not permit us to affirm that the changeful is inevitably the imperfect or to admit the Oriental axiom that 'the impermanent is necessarily miserable'. If we could imagine an unending series of changes from one perfect state to another, we should not view it with regret; each succeeding state of being or phase of creation might be new but none the less perfect, and the sense of change might become an added joy.

The concept of God as eternal and unchanging has been taken as giving us a principle for our valuation of the things of our own experience. Thus by a prevalent judgement of values the things which are believed to be eternal are to be counted as of

[1] Sophocles, *Antig.* l. 456.

[2] Macauliffe, *Sikh Religion*, vol. 1, p. 154.

higher value than those which are transitory; and in many discussions concerning the immortality of the soul and the justification of morality it is often maintained that without the assumption of immortality neither life nor morality could be shown to have real or ultimate value or good. This implies that there can be no real good or value in that which passes away: a doctrine which easily lends itself to pessimism and to the depreciation of human life. But the doctrine can be shown to clash with some of our deeper judgements of value. Greek philosophy was familiar with the distinction between the things called ἀΐδια or everlasting, and the things called γενητὰ καὶ φθαρτά, things that came into being and perished, and the former were sometimes described as the more 'divine' (θεῖα), being more akin to the divine nature: the facts of mathematics were among the 'eternal' things. We might admit that a triangle, as a timeless concept, was in some sense 'eternal'. But in our judgement of values we should place a temporary Shakespeare above an eternal triangle. Though we may admit that a good and valuable thing gains by being eternal, it does not follow that eternity is in itself a test of value, or that a thing intrinsically of small account would be any the better by being everlasting. There is deep philosophy in Ben Jonson's couplet—

> In small proportions we just beauties see,
> And in short measures life may perfect be.

This establishes the reasonable value of the fading flower or the ephemeral blue butterfly. We may

maintain that a thing or a state does not loose in value because it has an end: the end may be a new beginning, and this beginning may be all the better in so far as the former thing was good. What is of importance is not so much duration, as the quality of the energy or the life displayed. We may conceive existences that grow, dilate, and are perfected with the fullness and joy of life in the space of a moment, and in these the creative spirit may have shown its power more marvellously than in other longer-enduring existences. And it is the perfection of God rather than his eternity that makes the strongest claim on the adoration of the believer.

Unchangeableness as an attribute of divinity has always been interpreted somewhat freely by the popular religions, as indicating only the essential permanence of his character. They have never accepted the concept in the most rigid sense so as to rule out the possibility of such psychical changes in the deity as are induced by the various emotions. Stoic thought and the religious theory of Aristotle might posit an emotionless deity; but such a being, incapable of anger or pity or of relenting and of being moved by prayer would be of no avail for the religious needs and sentiment of the people, so far as the historical record gives us a picture of these. But the question how far the attribution of an emotional nature to God could be reconciled with the concept of his unchangeableness has never been thoroughly treated by either the Christian or non-Christian philosophy of religion. The philosophic

reformers of old Greek religion were content with purifying the divine character of baser emotions, such as jealousy or sex-desire, and the deeper thought of Greece came to the determination that it was unworthy to impute anger—even righteous anger—to the Highest God; not because it was necessarily a temporary perturbation, but because it was ignoble: on the other hand, pity, though equally temporary (unless, indeed, evil and pain were eternal), was consonant with the noblest ideal of the beneficent Godhead. In fact, the progress that can be discerned in our religious evolution has been mainly a progress from the primitive concept of divinity as a being capricious, corruptible, cruel, and wrathful to the ideal of a Being unchanging, wholly just, beneficent, and loving. Our own orthodox and traditional religion is only at the half-way in this advance; for its dogmatic scheme is framed on the compromise between divine wrath and divine pity, and it still gives a place of authority to the Old Testament, wherein the highest expressions of religious inspiration are apt to be disfigured and darkened by the intrusion of Jahwé's wrath or fierce emotion. Justice and punishment are consonant with a high divine ideal; but wrath or anger is 'anthropopathic' and undivine, and pardonable only in a man in view of our human weakness.

The imputation to the deity of any passing emotion, whether noble or ignoble, may be reconcilable with the view of his essential unchangeableness, but is not with the concept of a timeless Being.

For our emotions are part of our experiences in time; and if we attribute them to the deity as transient psychic states, the time-determination inheres to them: a 'timeless' person could not pass from one emotion to another.

The first article of our Church insists that God is 'without passions'; and the history of this phrase relates it to the Greek ἀπαθής, the attribute of a changeless and timeless personality.

But there are certain psychic states, humanly regarded as emotions, such as joy or love, which we could impute to the divine nature not as a transient experience but as an eternal or 'timeless' condition. As regards love, no difficulty either for popular or philosophic thought need arise. This may be regarded as the crowning trait of the highest divine character, not so much as an emotion but as an eternal mood essential to the unchanging and eternal God; and Christian philosophy has used it as an explanation of his creative agency. We may also find that joy has been included in the divine consciousness, and not as a passing emotion, but as an abiding mood: the prevalent pre-Christian Greek conception of the divine existence was 'blessedness' which included joy; and this agrees with St. Augustine's view, who attributes eternal joy in himself to God.[1] But here the difficulty arises of imagining how this unchanging state of consciousness could coexist with pity, which implies sorrow, the emotion

[1] *Confessions*, 8. 3. pp. 4–5: 'Thou art everlastingly joy to Thyself.'

which the more advanced popular belief insists on attributing to the divinity and on which much of our Christology is based.

The inclusion of certain emotions in our ideal of the divine character is inevitable on the 'anthropopathic' plane of the religious imagination; and has always been found in those religions which have won a long-enduring and wide supremacy. But the few indications given above may suffice to show that the emotional elements in the divine concept need to be reconsidered and reinterpreted if they are to be harmonized with some of the leading postulates of current religious philosophy.

There still remains to consider the difficulties that may arise in connexion with the other remaining attributes among those enumerated above, Infinity and Omnipotence. The former frequently, the latter generally, has been regarded as essential to the ideal concept of divinity; but the former term is too vague to be of value for religion or for thought without more precise determination.[1] The statement that God is Infinite would probably not be intended

[1] In prevalent Greek thought, especially the Platonic, Infinity in the sense of τὸ ἄπειρον was evil, and πέρας, its opposite in the sense of definite form, was good. The only popular religious text that explicitly raises and determines the question whether Infinity is an attribute of high divinity is one of the Pahlavi texts on the Bundahis (the Original Creation), which may contain old Zarathustrian elements: 'both the Good and the Bad Spirit, Aûharmazd and Aharman, are both limited and unlimited': *Sacr. Books East*, vol. 5, pp. 4–5. St. Augustine also admits that God is in some sense 'bounded', for instance bounded on the side of evil. *Confessions*, 5. 10.

to convey the sense of infinite spatial extension. It might be the formula of a pantheistic creed and theory, in the sense that God was all-pervasive throughout an infinite universe; and the difficulty of accommodating pantheism to a morally and spiritually effective religion has been already indicated. By a more precise and special interpretation we may understand and accept the phrase in the sense that the various powers, functions, and attributes that make up the divine character are not bound by any limitations; thus we can claim a clear meaning and validity for the assertions that God's justice, kindness, love, wisdom, power, are infinite. Now each of these separate 'infinities' might be considered independently. But while little or no perplexity or contradiction has been found in the attribution of infinite wisdom or infinite love, the human intellect has been confronted with the most baffling of all problems in respect of the infinite power or omnipotence of the deity. For the problem involves the explanation and moral justification of evil in the world of man and the world of nature. And ancient and modern thought, the thought of prophet, saint, and philosopher, has travailed and agonized to reconcile this evil with the infinite power and the infinite love of the deity. A critical review of the efforts of the ages must pronounce that no such reconciliation has been found.

It is obvious that the difficulty only arises if we insist both on omnipotence and infinite love as

essential divine attributes. It therefore did not trouble the writers of the Old Testament, who were more interested in the attribute of omnipotence than of beneficence, and who with their crude notions of justice and vicarious punishment were content to explain human miseries as due punishment for man's sin and the evil in the world of nature, of which they knew comparatively little,[1] as the collateral result of God's curse on Adam, and who did not shrink from the dogma that God was the just author of all evil. But such a view is of no avail for those who have attained to a more refined conception of divine justice and a higher ideal of divine beneficence, and who through modern biology and zoology are familiar with the torment and horror rife in the animal world. If we, then, critically survey the other solutions attempted by ancient and modern thinkers, we shall find that at best they only avail for a small portion of the problem.

On the whole these attempts have followed three main lines. Evil has been negated altogether as an illusion. Or it has been belittled and reduced to slight proportions in comparison with the good. Or it has been justified as necessary to the evolution of spiritual beings or to the larger good of the cosmos. And it is generally admitted by those who have dealt with the problem that the two most comprehensive

[1] It is only in the apocryphal 'Second Esdras' that we find a serious recognition of the challenge flung by the facts of the world against the beneficence of God; vide Burkitt, *Schweich Lectures*, 1913, pp. 42–3.

terms by which we may sum up evil are sin and pain, giving us the dual distinction between moral and physical evil.

As regards the first of these attempted solutions, its hopelessness has already been indicated. The theory that evil is an illusion is on the same level as the similar theory of the unreality of the sensible world. Our consciousness of evil is at least as positive and vivid as our consciousness of good; and if our judgement of evil has no validity, neither has our judgement of good. Nor will our common consciousness agree with the dictum that evil is only negative, the absence or privation of good, as St. Augustine appears to have believed.[1] This idea seems latent in the explanation of evil ascribed to Aristotle, namely that evil in our world is due to the great distance that the good has to traverse before it reaches us, so that what seems evil is only exhausted or weakened good.[2] This explanation is quaint and does not agree with our strong perception that pain and anguish are more than the absence or the weakness of pleasure, grief and sorrow more than the absence of joy. The familiar Stoic gospel denying or belittling pain did not in any case attempt to apply itself to the problem of evil in the animal world, and though revealing much ethical nobility is based on bad psychology. We may at times succeed by a higher spiritual interpretation in removing from the popular category of evils some

[1] *Confessions*, 3. 7 : 'As yet I knew not that evil is nothing but the privation of good.'

[2] *De Mundo*, p. 397 B.

that may have been wrongly so called; public obloquy, for instance, is not necessarily an evil to a righteous man confident in his cause; and by more than one theory of life death may come to be regarded as a good. But in spite of such readjustments and partial triumphs, the bulk of evil that defies such transformation remains the heaviest of problems for those who try to account for it in accordance with accepted theistic beliefs.

The third solution mentioned above is more serious. The attempts to justify the existence of evil and to reconcile it with the ideal of an omnipotent and beneficent God are among the most interesting events in the history of the human spirit. There has been at least some measure of success in explaining the problem of human wickedness and the evil resulting from it. God's omnipotence must be interpreted as an intelligible, not a self-contradictory omnipotence; and it is no limitation of an intelligible omnipotence to maintain that there were certain conceivable things that an omnipotent God could not do; for instance, as Homer long ago declared, not even God could alter the past. Similarly, if it were God's purpose to create or enlarge a fellowship of free spirits or spiritual beings akin to himself—and we can understand that this might well be the natural purpose of an omnipotent and loving God—he must endow such beings with free will; and to carry out his purpose he must voluntarily limit or in some degree suspend his own omnipotence; for such free persons, once created, must have the power to choose evil, that is, to

thwart and inhibit his own will; but as one cannot choose evil or good in a vacuum, the world in which such beings moved must be framed with such qualities as to produce pain or evil if wrongly handled by them. This is a satisfactory answer to the question, Why does an omnipotent God allow man to sin? and it may be a partially satisfying answer to the question why the world of things is so constituted as to produce such misery as a result of sin. But the answer is only of avail if it can be also maintained that the Creator in no way weighted the scales against man; for our belief in the infinite benevolence cannot long endure the doctrine that God implanted in man a strong original propensity to sin or that he clothed him with a flesh that by its own essential operations made sin inevitable; and the fallacy in St. Paul's parable of the potter and his clay can be easily exposed; as it may be argued that if a potter designedly fashioned a pot of poisonous clay, which he then made conscious, and it suffered misery from its inherent poison, the potter was malevolent.[1] To such a Creator we might say with Fitzgerald:

> Oh Thou, who man of baser earth didst make,
> And e'en with Paradise devise the snake,
> For all the sin wherewith the face of man
> Is blackened, man's forgiveness give—and take.[2]

[1] Something like this is the indictment brought by von Hartmann against 'the Unconscious', for making the fatal blunder of giving birth to consciousness and the world; vide Rashdall, *Theory of God and Evil*, vol. 2.

[2] *Omar Khayyám*, 81.

But the solution just put forth, though there is light and value in it, does not clear the baffling sense of mystery in view of the distribution of human pain; that the material world must have been so constituted as to allow a free agent to work evil is an admission that does not explain the immense vicarious suffering of the innocent, the 'vagitus ingens infantum'. An omnipotent deity, being absolute lord over matter, his own creation, might be logically imagined to have shaped it more mercifully. Nor is the solution available for the problem of mere physical evil that cannot be 'moralized' or brought into any intelligible relation with morality; nor for the problem of the pain broadcast throughout the animal world, which appears the more poignant the deeper we look.

A different solution has found favour with some modern writers who have tried the riddle. An omnipotent and benevolent Deity need not arrange the universe or our immediate world for our happiness: the eudaimonistic ideal is not the highest: the life of placid unruffled ease and contentment, even when enfolded with beautiful and happy thought and feeling and even if secured to each and every man as his lot and therefore unselfishly enjoyed, would not be so high in the scale of spiritual value as the life of high-pitched effort and strain, fraught with deep sorrow and pain nobly borne; hence comes a loftier mood of the soul: 'deeper their voices and nobler their bearing whose youth in the fire of anguish has died'; those who have gone

through the furnace have this intuition; and the higher divinity of sorrow is recognized in the voice of great tragedy and some forms of art. God's purpose is not happiness but soul-elevation; through certain forms of sorrow man's soul rises to a point nearer to God. The world-agony then is necessary to the evolution of the highest soul-life.

Stated in vague and abstract terms, the theory is plausible, and parts of it agree with the deepest experiences of some of us. But confronted with the many particulars of evil, it breaks down. It applies only to pain that can ennoble. But we know of much hopeless pain, even in the human world, that is vile, deadly, and degrading; and though we may be so stimulated by the divine will and so inspired by science that we may one day abolish it, that is no apology for its existence now and in the past.

Nor does the theory offer a solution that we can accept for the misery of the animal world. It never risks itself by approaching the burning test of a particular case. If it were to assure us that the agony suffered by the dying whale in the blood-stained seas, when his enemies were slowly devouring him alive, was necessary and conducive to the highest evolution of our souls, we should reject it in mockery or horror; and the act of faith necessary to believe in the unproved connexion between such an event and the laws of our soul-life is greater than any that authority has demanded of us. The pious vegetarian Porphyry[1] declares that a benevolent

[1] *De Abstin.* 3. 26.

God would not decree that the good of our bodies should depend on the sufferings of animals, and the modern anti-vivisectionist might urge the same view. We may maintain the same principle in respect of our soul's welfare. If the world-pain is part of a benevolent scheme designed for our higher life, which we cannot discern, then the dangerous thought emerges that our principles of moral action are not those of God; dangerous, because it endangers our conviction of the divine basis of our own morality, and because it naturally engenders such pessimism as was heard from the lips of the pious Babylonian in an utterance of great antiquity that reminds us of certain passages in Job—'Who can understand the counsel of the Gods in heaven, God's plan is full of darkness, who hath searched it out?' This is accompanied by the despairing thought that what is evil in man's view is good in the sight of God.[1]

There is yet another solution to consider that has won adherents both in ancient and modern times,[2] namely that the apparent evil in human life and in the physical world is necessary to some higher cosmic plan, 'to the salvation of the Whole' (*σωτηρία τοῦ ὅλου*),[3] some divine scheme embracing and maintaining the whole universe and transcending our vision and our sphere. This is the idea underlying some of the

[1] Vide my *Greece and Babylon*, p. 155; Zimmern, *Babylonische Hymnen und Gebete*, pp. 28–30.

[2] It commended itself to the rationalism of the eighteenth century, as is shown by Pope's *Essay on Man*.

[3] This is the phrase used by Maximus Tyrius, *Diss.* 41 (Reiske, p. 284).

verses in the famous hymn of the Stoic Cleanthes, and Plutarch ascribes a similar theory to Chrysippus of the same school, namely that our evil is perhaps necessary to some other part of the universe.[1] This theory differs from the others just examined, in that it is no longer 'anthropocentric'. It subordinates man to a higher cosmic policy, which he cannot discern, but must blindly accept as an article of faith. Man himself is thus treated by the Deity as a means to some end that lies far beyond and above him. Our life with all its sin and suffering serves some purpose which is accomplished in Neptune or Seirius; whereas in the view of our most modern ethical philosophers the cosmic arrangements in Seirius and Neptune are solely for the benefit of man's soul. The Stoic theory is consistent with a lofty theism, but one of a stern and non-human type. It saves divine omnipotence but scarcely divine benevolence as understood by the leading popular religions of the world: in fact, no known historic religion has ever been based on it. And some of its implications are destructive of our ethical values and assumptions; in so far as it implies that sin may be as necessary to the cosmic plan as virtue; and that the divine Power may treat man merely as a means, whereas our ethical system is based mainly on the Kantian formula that man is never to be treated as a means merely but always as an end.

Therefore, as we must interpret divine love and

[1] *De Stoic Repugn.* 35, p. 1050 F. Plutarch gives a shallower Stoic theory of evil in *De Commun. Notit.* 13 (p. 1065 A).

benevolence somewhat at least on human lines, we cannot say that such a theory is reconcilable with the assumption that infinite power and infinite love are essential attributes of God.

If this assumption is to be accepted as a necessary axiom, there is nothing more to say except with Calvin, 'the procedure of Divine justice is too high to be scanned by human measure or comprehended by the feebleness of human intellect';[1] or with Lotze, 'Let us say that, where there is an irreconcilable contradiction between the omnipotence and the goodness of God, our finite wisdom has come to the end of its tether, and that we do not understand the solution which yet we believe in'.[2] 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him' is the highest religious expression for this self-abnegation of the intellect. And this may well be the last word of wisdom.

But the intellect is always refusing to abdicate, and has in recent years been trying a new path of approach to the heart of the problem, or rather has been reopening an old path. The assumption concerning the two essential attributes has been challenged by William James and Dean Rashdall. That God's love is infinite is a necessary basis for our religion and ethics and is given us by our intuitive perception of him; that his power is infinite

[1] Calvin, *Instit.* 3. 23. 2. 4 (quoted *E. R. E.* 3, p. 152).

[2] Quoted in *E. R. E.* 6, p. 324, from *Microcosmus*, 2. 717, in the English translation; in the German text, 1872², vol. 3, p. 605.

is not necessary nor so given us. 'The practical needs and experiences of religion seem to me sufficiently met by the belief that beyond each man and in a fashion continuous with him there exists a larger power which is friendly to him and his ideals. . . . It need not be infinite, it need not be solitary.'[1] The statement has the flatness of American 'pragmatism'. The theory is expressed more philosophically and with more religious depth by Dean Rashdall in his *Theory of Good and Evil*,[2] where his position may be briefly summarized thus: God created souls, even the bad soul, and the best world he could, because he is finite and could only create what was in his nature to create, and he has often to do evil as a means to do good: 'there is in the ultimate nature of things, that is to say, the ultimate nature of God—an inherent reason why greater good should not be obtainable.'[3] There is a difficulty in this statement which seems to have escaped the writer. He wishes to explain evil as due to a limitation of power in God, not to any limitation of his goodness. But the last quotation appears to assert that the evil in the world is due to the ultimate nature of things, and Dean Rashdall, being an idealist and desirous of avoiding dualism, maintains that the ultimate nature of things is the ultimate nature of God. And if the ultimate nature of God is such that it must produce a partially evil

[1] James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 525.
[2] See especially vol. 2, pp. 286–90, 338–45.
[3] *Op. cit.* p. 287.

world, it might be more natural to conclude that it was his goodness or his wisdom rather than his power that was limited. But any limitation of the goodness or the wisdom of God is more alien to the religious mind as revealed in the history of the higher religions than some limitation of his power.

In any case, the idea of a God in some way limited is not necessarily repugnant to advanced religion, and we find Origen accepting it without scruple.[1] It certainly lends itself to dualism, for it implies some other force or substance or principle other than God which limits him. And this implication is in accord with the main current of Greek philosophy, which is dualistic in spite of Plato, and which so far as it deals seriously with the great religious problem of evil, is less concerned to champion the doctrine of 'monism' or the unlimited divine omnipotence as to purify the concept of God's character from any imputation of evil and to shield him from any responsibility for it. It inclines therefore to the view that God did not create matter and that though matter is not intrinsically evil there is some quality of stubborn resistance in matter that prevents it being shaped in accordance with the perfect divine idea and to the perfect form that God would impress upon it. An echo of this thought is in Matthew Arnold's phrase—'the something that infects the world'. This Greek view is fortified by the stimulating thought which finds some expression in Greek

[1] Vide Origen's fragment quoted by Rashdall, *The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology*, p. 268.

literature that the divine power and goodness are shown by the providential skill whereby evil can be turned into good at the last.[1]

This solution is logical and satisfying if we can accept the idea of a finite God and a cosmic duality. The latter assumption has always been repugnant to the traditional orthodoxy of Christianity, as it inherited the Judaic dogma of an Omnipotent God, the sole and absolute Creator; and it is repugnant to the idealist philosophy of modern times with its insistence on a monistic explanation of the universe. But the sin of dualism—if it is a sin—is occasionally committed by its most ardent opponents. Much Christian writing has been guilty of it in denunciations of the inherent sinfulness of the flesh and of the processes of the flesh created by God. And modern monistic theorists are liable to fall into it unheedingly, especially when they are dealing with our present problem, which for them and for Christianity of the orthodox tradition must remain insoluble in terms of the intellect.

We may say that only one nation has ever frankly accepted the dual principle and built upon it a great world-religion, the religion of the later system of Mazdeism, which survives in modern Parsism and faintly perhaps in one or two backward tribes of Asia

[1] First in a play of Menander, the profound sentiment put strangely into the mouth of a cook; Περικειρ. ll. 49–50:

> διὰ γὰρ Θεοῦ καὶ τὸ κακὸν εἰς ἀγαθον ῥέπει
> γινόμενον;

then in the hymn of Cleanthes.

where an indistinct Zarathustrian tradition still lingers.[1] The duality is primarily between the two spirits, the Good and the Evil, but it penetrates the whole world, of which the created things, good and evil, are distributed between the two spirits. It implies a finite God, who may be believed, however, to win omnipotence and sole dominion in the end. And there appears in a few texts an interesting corollary of the doctrine of a finite God, namely, that man is necessary to God as God to man, that God endows the faithful with good will and good thought, so that man may aid him in the long-enduring struggle.[2] We have even a beautiful legend that before creating man Ahura offered the Fravashis, his immortal ministers, the choice of remaining in the spiritual sphere or of descending to earth to aid man in his conflict with the demons; and they accepted the more strenuous part.[3] The religion conveyed a stirring appeal to the moral energies of man, and on a far higher and more spiritual plane bears a faint resemblance to the barbaric theology of the Scandinavian bards of the viking age. And it was the religion that offered the explanation of evil most intelligible to the popular mind and most easily reconcilable with the infinite goodness of God.

A religion that appeals only to the intellect must always be lacking in warmth and living power. But

[1] *Anthrop. Journ.* 1911, p. 204.

[2] e. g. text quoted by Moulton, *Early Zoroastrianism*, p. 355: 'he shall be the most helpful companion to thee, O Mazdah Ahura.'

[3] Moulton, *op. cit.* p. 161.

a religion that makes intellectual assumptions incurs intellectual obligations ; and cannot admit the claim, occasionally made in our pulpits, that incoherence, and self-contradiction are proofs of the highest truth. Intellectual progress in a religion means progress towards harmony and coherence in its assumptions ; its moral progress depends on its willingness to revise and purge from time to time its liturgy, ritual, and sacred texts so as to bring them into unison with its accepted knowledge and its highest moral ideals.

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